Computer Files & Formats

Identifying and Working with Popular Data Files

Computers (and the humans using them) digitally store information ("data") in **files**.

Literally thousands of different kinds of computer files exist, but here's some good news:
you only really need to recognize a few of them!

Files have names (**file names**) and often have *file extensions*, as in **classnotes.txt**. The **.txt** part is the **file extension**, which can help you (and your computer) identify what the **file format** is and what software is required to enable you to work with the file.

These are popular file formats you might encounter when using computers:

File Extensions	Description	Software Often Used with File
.avi .mov	Movies or animations	Windows Media Player, Apple QuickTime
.doc .docx	Word processing documents	Microsoft Word, OpenOffice (Word 2007+ for **.docx**)
.exe	A program (software). Warning: an .exe file could contain a virus (online, in e-mail)	Microsoft Windows (operating system)
.ftw .ged	Family trees, genealogy information	Family Tree Maker, genealogy databases
.gif .jpg .png	Graphics image files, photographs	Web browsers, Adobe Photoshop, GIMP
.htm .html .shtml	Web pages (HyperText Markup Language)	Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Opera
.mp3	Sound or music file	Windows Media Player, Real Player, Winamp
.odt	Word processing document	OpenOffice
.pdf	Document, book (Portable Document Format)	Adobe Reader
.ppt .pps	Presentation, slide shows	Microsoft PowerPoint
.pub	Desktop publishing (flyers,newsletters, etc.)	Microsoft Publisher
.rtf	Document (Rich Text Format)	Microsoft WordPad, most other word processors
.ttf	Font (TrueType Font)	Word processors, desktop publishing programs
.txt	Text file	Microsoft Notepad, text editors, word processors
.wav	Sound file (Waveform Audio File Format)	Windows Media Player, QuickTime
.wma .wmv	Windows Media files (audio / video)	Windows Media Player, some MP3 players
.xls .csv	Spreadsheet files	Microsoft Excel, OpenOffice Spreadsheet
.wpd	Word processing file	WordPerfect, other compatible word processors
.wps	Word processing file	Microsoft Works
.zip	Compressed file. Can contain one or more files (or possibly a computer virus)	Most operating systems, PKZIP, WinZip