

(Approx. 1266 words)

Back To Basics

Saving a File

By Jim Cerny, 2nd Vice President, Sarasota TUG, FL

May 2015 issue, Sarasota Technology Monitor

www.thestug.org

[jimcerny123 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:jimcerny123@gmail.com)

We have all saved files, or at least we have tried. There are times, however, that we can get confused or confounded by our files. Things may not always work the way we want. I hope this article will help clear things up and help you understand how to easily save files so that you can find them again.

Files are collections of data that are created by using a program on your computer. EVERY FILE HAS A NAME. For example, the Microsoft Word program creates files called documents, the Paint program creates files which are images, your digital camera creates photos or picture files, and if you are playing a game on your computer and you can save it, that game is saved as a file. So when we use a computer and want to keep anything we have done, we must save it as a FILE.

FILES ARE SAVED IN A FOLDER. A folder is a PLACE in your computer. Think of it like a manila folder in a file drawer. A folder also has a name so you can find it as well. If you can find the folder you want, then you have found the files that are in it.

Perhaps the best way to understand how to save a file is to go through an example. Let's say you are creating a new document using the Word program. To SAVE your document go to the "file" tab or option. (On some editions of programs the "file" tab or menu does not have the word "file" on it, it could be just a blue tab in the upper left corner of the window). When you open the file menu you have two basic choices for saving your document – you can select "Save" or "Save as...". My advice is to always use "Save as..." because you will always get the "Save as" window to help you save your file. (In Word 2013 you don't get the "Save as" window right away, you get a list of your most recent folders. Clicking on any folder will open the "Save as" window for you).

The "Save as" window has the important options or choices you need to make every time you save a file. These three options are the Folder into which your file will be saved, the Name of the file, and the File Type. You do not have to change these if you do not want to, but at least look at them to see what you are doing.

The first option at the top of the window is a long box with the name of the FOLDER into which your new document will be saved. The folder that you see there is the "default" folder that will be used unless you change it to a different

folder. On the left part of the window is a list of all your folders just like you see in Windows Explorer. Use this part of the window to find and click on the folder you want to save your document. When you select a folder you should see the folder name in the box at the top of the window (along with the “path name” of how to get to that folder). If you have a folder named “Letters to Doctor” and that folder is in your “My documents” folder, then the path name in the box will be “My documents > Letters to Doctor”. The folder name that will be used to save your document will be at the end of the path. If you do not change the folder, your file will be saved in the folder that appears in this box.

The second option to check is the NAME of the file which appears in the box to the right of “File name”. The name that is in that box will be used as the file name unless you change it to something else. Usually the name will be already highlighted for you to change – if so, you can just start typing the name you want. If it is not highlighted, click in the box to highlight it and change it. Always give your file a good name that means something to you. (When using Word, the name of the document given by default is usually the first line of text).

The third and final option is to select the file type which appears in the “Save as type:” box at the bottom of the “Save as” window. Some programs such as Word will allow you to select from several different file types. If you are the only one using the files you create you probably will not have to bother with the “file type” at all and you can leave it alone. Basically, if you create the file on your computer you will always be able to open that file because you have the program that created it. The issue with “file types” becomes important when you send one of your files to someone else or someone else sends a file to you (such as an email attachment or a file you download from the internet). The “file type” is a three or four character code that comes after the dot (period) in all file names. It identifies the file so that your computer can try to use a program to open that file. As an example, if you create a document using Microsoft Word version 2013 and send that document to someone who does NOT have Microsoft Word 2013 on their computer, they may not be able to open and read that file (document). Fortunately, Microsoft Word has the ability to save your document as a different “file type” and you can select from those options by clicking on the tiny arrow in the right end of the “file type” box. If you are eager to learn more about file types, just Google it!

Well, that’s the scoop on the “Save as...” window. If you use the “Save” option instead of “Save as...” you may not get the “Save as” window at all. If you are making changes to a file you already have, then using “Save” will REPLACE your file with your changed version – and your previous file is GONE. So “Save as” gives you the option to give your file a new name (and keep your old file) if that is what you want.

Remember to save your work often to avoid that sinking feeling you get when you realize you didn’t do a save. Some programs, like your email program, may

do saves periodically while you are typing your email. If something happens look in your "Draft" email folder to see if your unfinished email is there.

Finally, after you actually do a "Save" or a "Save as...", the computer may not tell you anything – there will not be a message such as "Your file "Club Report" has been saved to the "Club Meetings" folder". So what do you do? – you go and LOOK for the file to confirm that it has been saved in the folder you intended. So open up the Windows Explorer program and find it. Do it right away before you forget where you saved it! If all else fails, you can always do a "search" for a file or a folder to try to find it, but that is for people who are disorganized, not you, right?