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How to safely remove a USB drive or external hard drive

Pulling out a drive while the computer is still using it can damage the files or the drive. Taking a few seconds to eject it first helps keep your data safe.

Why it matters

Your computer often keeps writing small bits of data to a drive in the background, even after a copy looks finished. If you pull it out too soon, files may be lost or damaged, and the drive may ask to be repaired or formatted next time.

On Windows

1. Finish copying or saving, and close any files stored on the drive.
2. Look at the right side of the taskbar, near the clock. You may need to click the small **up arrow** to show hidden icons.
3. Click the **Safely Remove Hardware and Eject Media** icon, which looks like a USB plug.
4. Choose your drive from the list.
5. Wait for the message saying it is safe to remove, then unplug it.

You can also open **File Explorer**, right-click the drive and choose **Eject**.

On a Mac

1. Close any open files on the drive.
2. Open **Finder** and look in the sidebar for the drive.
3. Click the small **eject** symbol next to it.
4. Wait until the drive disappears, then unplug it.

If it says the drive is in use

- Close any programs or windows that might be using it
- Wait a minute and try again
- As a last resort, shut the computer down fully and then unplug the drive

External hard drives

Wait for the drive to stop spinning, if it has moving parts, before moving it. Do not knock or carry it while it is running.

When to get more help

If a drive has been removed without ejecting and now shows errors or will not open, do not format it. Contact us and tell us what the message says so we can try to save your files.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.