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# My USB drive is not showing or asks me to format it

Seeing a message such as "You need to format the disk before you can use it" is worrying. Please do not click Format. Doing so usually wipes the files.

## Important first rule

That message often means the computer cannot read the drive, not that the drive is empty. Your files may still be there and recoverable. Formatting would erase the way the files are listed and make recovery much harder.

If the drive holds anything important, such as photos, work or documents, stop here and get help.

## What to do

1. Click **Cancel** or close the message. Do not choose **Format disk**.
2. Remove the drive safely, if you can.
3. Try a different USB port and, if possible, a different computer.
4. Try plugging it in directly, not through a hub.

## Check if the drive is seen at all

On Windows, right-click the **Start** button and choose **Disk Management**. Look for your drive in the list. Do not delete or format anything you see there.

On a Mac, open **Disk Utility** from Applications, then Utilities. If the drive appears in the left list, the Mac can see it, even if it will not open. Avoid choosing **Erase**.

## Common causes

- The drive was pulled out without being ejected
- The file system is damaged
- It was last used on a different type of computer
- The memory stick or drive is wearing out

## What not to do

- Do not format or erase
- Do not run repair programs from adverts
- Do not keep re-plugging it many times if it makes odd noises

## If it is a drive you do not need

If it is a blank drive with nothing you need on it, formatting is safe. Be sure first.

## When to get more help

If the files matter, contact us before trying anything else. We can often copy data off safely. Tell us what the message says, and whether the drive was recently removed without ejecting.

**Still stuck?** Email [admin@visiontech336.com](mailto: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.