

Windows laptops & PCs | Easy | 2 min read

Where did my file go? Finding and recovering deleted files

Losing a file is stressful, but there are several places to look, and often it can be brought back. The most important rule is to stop saving new things to the drive, because this can overwrite what you are trying to recover.

Find a file that is not where you left it

1. Press **Windows key + E** to open File Explorer.
2. Click the search box at the top right and type part of the name. Searching from **This PC** looks at all drives.
3. Try **Recent** or **Quick access** on the left, for files you opened lately.
4. In Word or Excel, choose **File**, then **Open**, then **Recent**.

Check the Recycle Bin

1. Double-click **Recycle Bin** on the desktop.
2. Find the file, right-click it and choose **Restore**.

It goes back to where it was. Files deleted from a USB drive, a network drive or by holding **Shift** while deleting do not go to the Recycle Bin.

Restore an earlier version

If you saved over a file, or a folder has lost items:

1. Right-click the file or folder and choose **Properties**.
2. Open the **Previous Versions** tab.
3. If versions are listed, select one and click **Open** to check it, or **Restore**.

Versions appear only if File History or System Restore was switched on. **Restore** replaces the current file, so use **Copy** instead if you are unsure.

Look online

- **OneDrive**: sign in at onedrive.live.com and open **Recycle bin**. Deleted files are held for a limited time.
- **Email attachments, downloads and messages** may still be in your email or browser.

What not to do

Do not install "recovery" programmes from search results and adverts. Many are scams or malware, and some demand payment for what you already own.

When to get more help

If the file was on a drive that has stopped working, was lost after a crash, or is important and not in any of the places above, stop using the PC and get in touch. The sooner a professional looks, the better the chance. Tell us the file name, type and when you last saw it.

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.