

COMPUTER SKILLS GROUP

Windows File Explorer and a little of Microsoft OneDrive

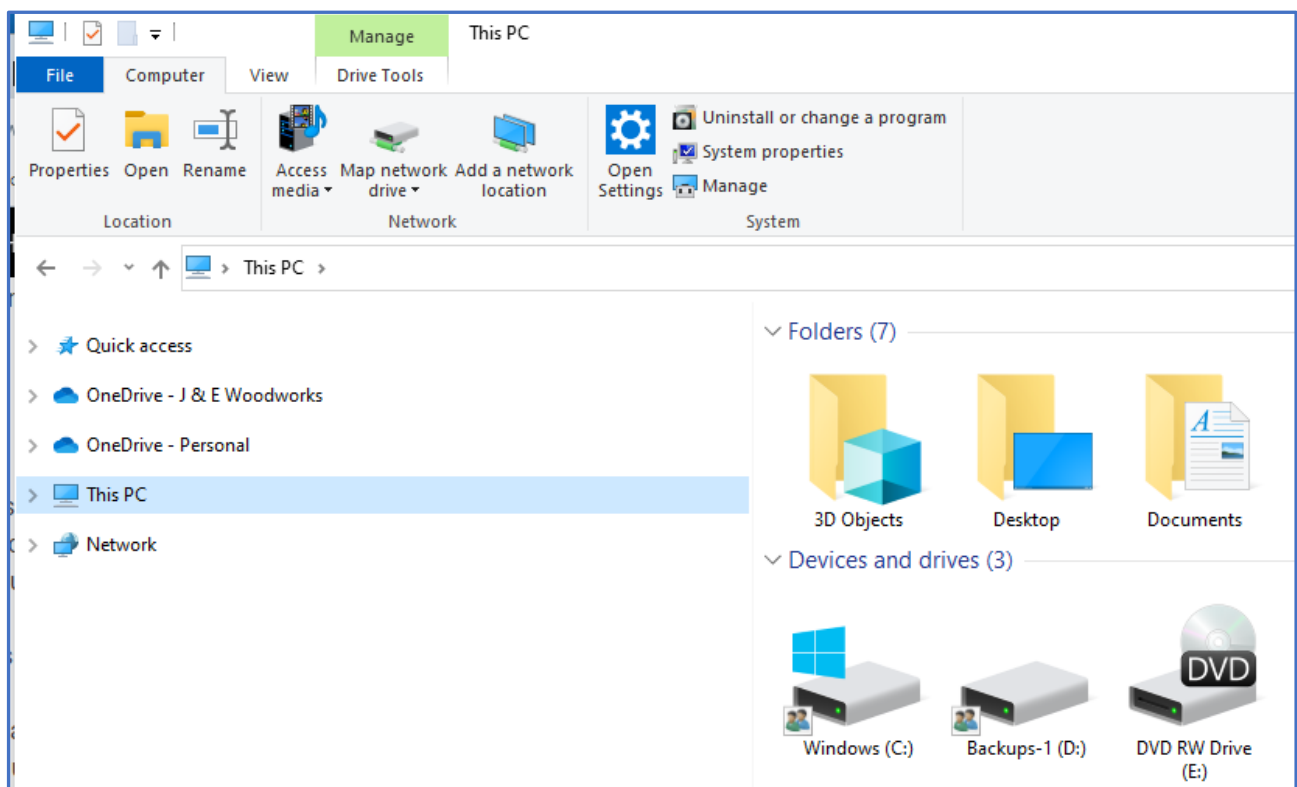
Understanding how Windows File Explorer Works is fundamental to getting the best out of your computer. File Explorer is usually available from your taskbar, I however, prefer the keyboard shortcut Windows+E ('E' for Explorer).

You could right click the start bar and select it from there or find it in the Programmes | Windows System folder. Or of course you could search File Explorer from the search bar.



File Explorer uses a Ribbon just like any of the Microsoft Office Applications. To save screen space and see more, you can collapse the ribbon if you wish. Use the little arrow at the top right of the screen or the keyboard shortcut Ctrl + F1. If you want even more space, then use the F11 key to maximise the File Explorer Window (and F11 again to return to normal). We'll come back to the Ribbon (Tool bars) in a while.

The left-hand sidebar shows you This PC, Quick Access your Network and, if you have it enabled, your Microsoft OneDrive. I've collapsed all my views here so you can see them easily. Double click each one to expand it and view the contents in the right-hand pane.



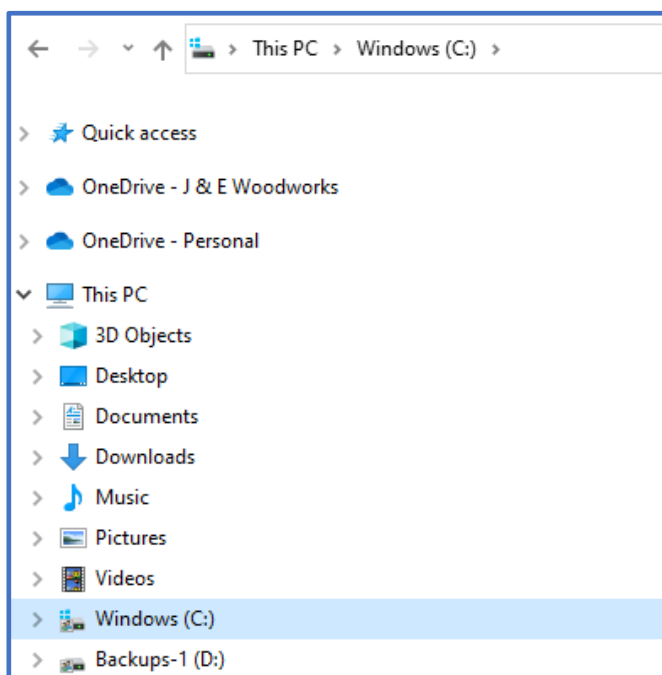
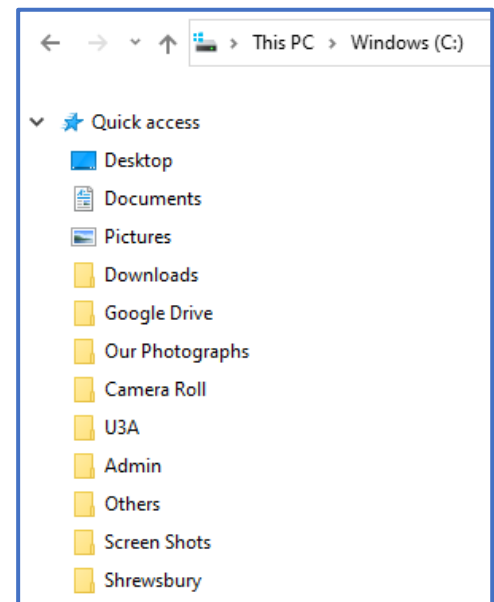
You'll notice I have two OneDrive's in the screenshot above; one is my personal Drive and the other is a OneDrive for Business. (J&E Woodworks Ltd)

Quick Access

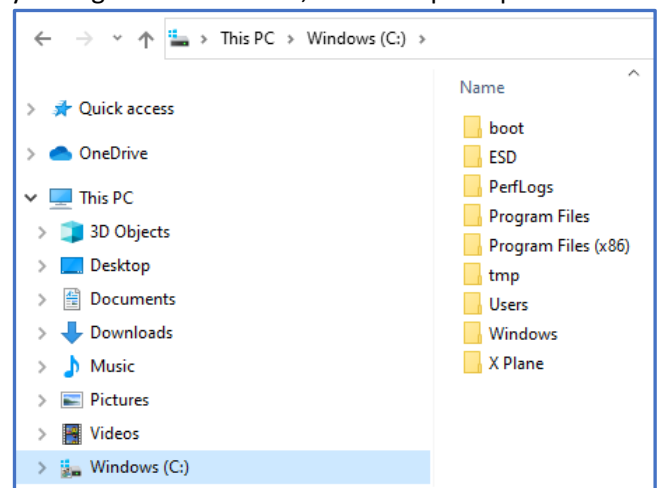
The Quick Access section as you would expect gives you quick access to your files and folders. If you have a favourite folder that you navigate to frequently, you can pin that folder to the Quick Access section. This is particularly good if your folder is nestled some 10 layers down in the tree structure. It saves a lot of clicking! Windows automatically pins some files and folders to the Quick Access section that you've used recently. You can see that my U3A folder and the Shrewsbury Folder are in my Quick Access list

This PC

This PC section is the heart of the computer. There are shortcuts to your Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Music, Pictures and Videos although all of these can be found by navigating down through the directory tree from the C drive.



This PC also includes the C drive + any other drives you might have installed, A D drive perhaps and a



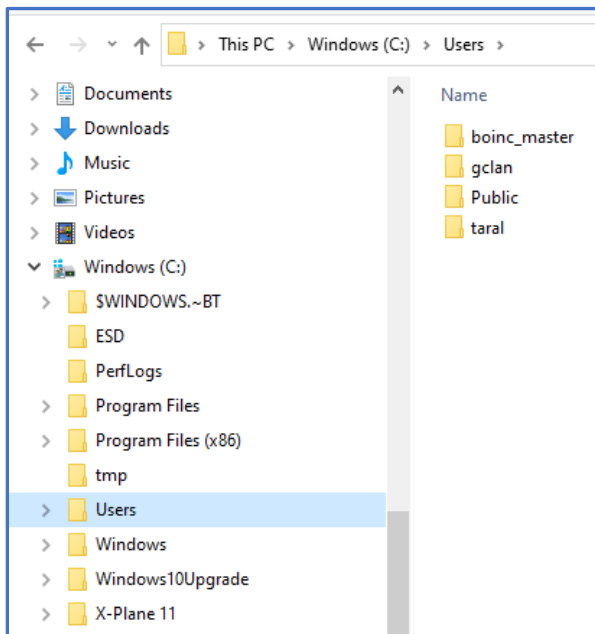
DVD drive

Three of the most useful folders in the C drive are

- Program Files
- Programme Files (x86)
- Users

Both Programme files folders contain all the software programmes that you have installed to your PC. Some programmes will have been written for 32-bit architecture and some programmes are written in the more advanced 64-bit architecture. Older 32-bit programmes will be in the (x86) folder.

You can change the name of the C drive (and D drive E drive etc) if you want, Right click the drive and then select Rename. You can see that I have called my D drive Backups-1. (Backups-2 and Backups-3 are on two other computers).

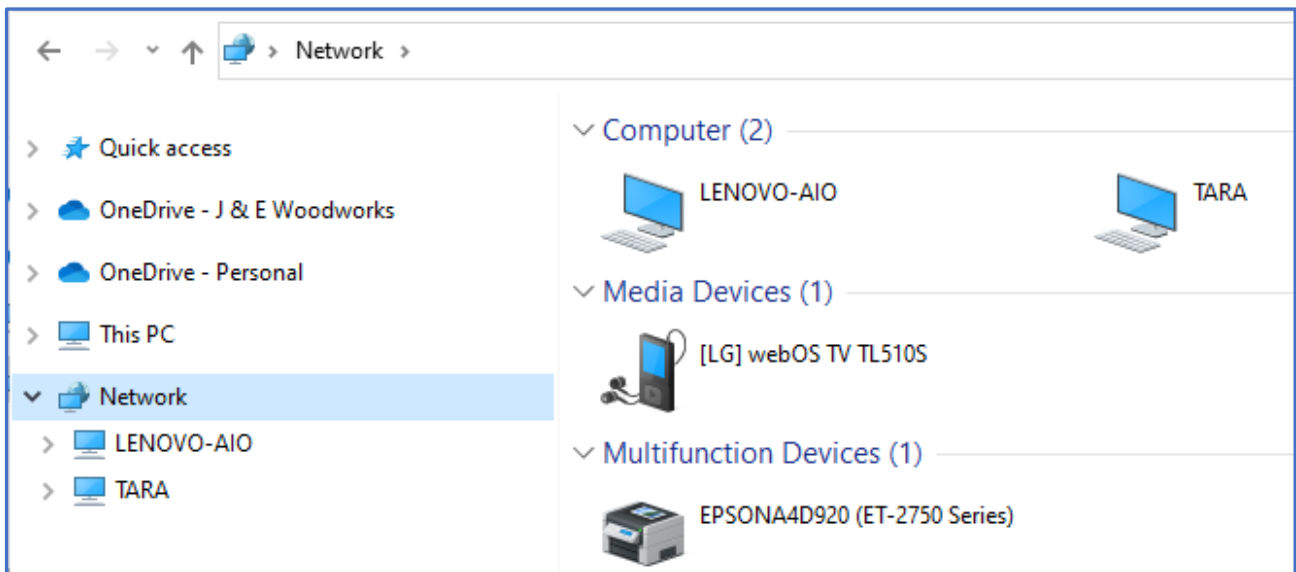


If you expand the 'Users' folder you will a top-level folder for every user that has an account on your computer. In my case there are 4. My account- gclan, my wife's – taral, the BOINC Account – required for an application that I run and a Public account. By default you only have access to your own and the Public account (although you could give yourself permission to access the others if you so wished). If you drill deeper into your account you see, amongst others, your documents folder, downloads, pictures and so on.

These folders just described are the “authoritative source” for your documents, downloads, pictures etc. The folders shown in 'Quick Access' and 'This PC' are just shortcuts to these locations.

Network

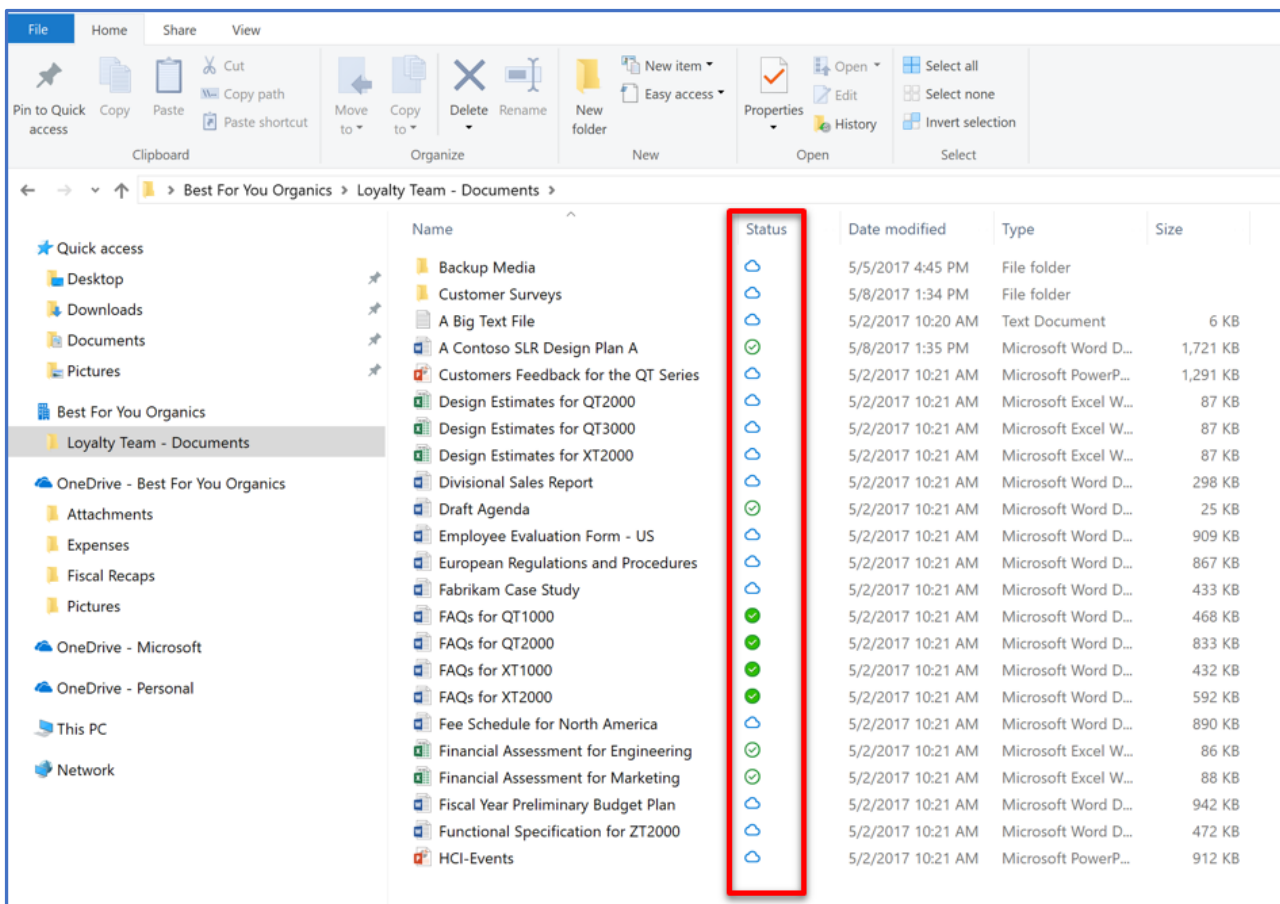
The final section is the Network Section. You can see here that Windows is showing two other computers, one called “Lenovo-aio” and one called “Tara”. Providing the permissions are set right, if we drilled down through these, we could see the Users on those computers. In my experience, the computers that are shown in the Network section are a bit hit and miss. Sometimes only a few are shown and sometimes quite a lot. In my case there should be five computers showing. What may show on one day, might not be there the next and there seems to be no rhyme or reason why this is so. I've researched this quite a lot over the years and so far have never found the real reason why it is. I think one reason is that because there is a better way to navigate to the other computers on your network and that is by “Mapped Drives”. More on this later.



OneDrive

The OneDrive folder gives access to cloud storage from your Microsoft Account. For a basic account you get 15GB free, although you can expand this if you so wish. I subscribe to Office 365 – which automatically increases the OneDrive to 1 TB. For a long time I ignored the OneDrive, preferring to keep all my documents locally on my (main) computer. I changed my mind about two years ago and the default location for my files and documents is now the OneDrive. There are several ways to use the OneDrive with your files. You can either:

1. Ignore the OneDrive and keep all your files locally on your computer at home.
2. Store all your files on the OneDrive and download them to use as necessary.
3. Use OneDrive 'Files-on-Demand'. OneDrive downloads small pieces of information about your files so that you can see the structure of your OneDrive, although you will need an internet connection to download the complete file when you want to access it.
4. Use "Always keep on this device". Windows keeps a local copy of your OneDrive files on your computer and continually keeps them in sync. Should you lose your internet connection, you will still be able to access your files and they will re-sync when you re-establish an internet connection. I use this option for my main computer.



Using the OneDrive you can check the status of your files.

1. The Blue Cloud icon represents an Online-only file. Only when you open the file will it download from the cloud to your local computer
2. The White circle with green border and green checkmark. A file that has been downloaded to your local computer whilst you were editing it.

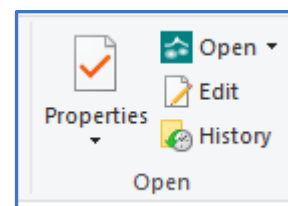
3. The Green circle with a white checkmark. Files that you have marked “Always keep on this device”. You can mark whole folders like this as I have done (Not in this screenshot though – this is someone else’s)
4. Cloud icon with arrows forming a circle Indicates that a file is syncing between your local computer and the OneDrive. (Not shown in this screenshot)
5. A red stop mark. A red circle with a white X. Sync issue or your OneDrive is full. (Not shown in this screenshot).

And on the taskbar down by the clock

1. Solid white cloud icon. OneDrive is running without problems and sync is up to date.
2. Solid blue cloud icon. Indicates a OneDrive for Business account. Running without problems and sync is up to date.
3. Solid grey cloud icon. OneDrive is running but isn’t connected to any account or you are signed out.
4. Cloud icon with arrows forming a circle. OneDrive is actively downloading or uploading files and folders to the cloud.
5. Cloud with solid red circle and white X in the middle. OneDrive is running, but there are sync problems that require attention.

The Ribbon

There are several tabs available on the ribbon. The **Home Tab** gives basic options for the clipboard (Cut, copy and paste), Organise – move and delete, New, Open and Select. Most of these options are straight forward, although there is one that requires a mention. Within the “Open” section is History. History is in actual fact a useful Backup tool, not just keeping a history (backup) of your files, but different versions of them too. (Edit 1, edit 2, edit 3 etc). History is *disabled* by default; you need to *enable* it to use it.



The **Share tab** gives options to share a file, files or folders. You can either attach them to an email, Zip them up in a compressed file, burn to a CD or Print them. Using the Share arrow, you can share a document by e-mail, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. If you use the ‘Mail’ option in share when sharing pictures (photographs), then very neatly you get the option to resize the pictures to something more sensible to send via email. Consider a photograph taken at high quality resolution. Its picture size might be 4,000 x 3000 pixels and the file size around 8 to 9000 Kbs (9Mbs). If you resize it to say something like 1024 x 768 (Medium size in the options) it will still be perfectly acceptable viewing on a regular computer screen, but more importantly, it’s file size will have reduced (in this case) to around 230 kbs. A massive reduction in file size which means if your ISP has a limit on file size for emails (which they do), you get to send a lot more photos for your bucks. (You could of course save the pictures to a shared OneDrive or iDrive folder and then send a *link* to your friends and family (rather than the actual photos)).

The View Tab has a number of sections. Panes, Layout, Current View & Show/Hide.

The Navigation pane in the **Panes** section controls how the left-hand sidebar (Navigation Pane is displayed, whilst the Preview pane and the Details pane show up in the right-hand sidebar. You can only have one of these at a time (or none).

The **Layout** section controls the views of the bulk of the screen. It shows how your files and folders are displayed. From Extra-large icons to Details. It’s your choice how you view them, although by preference (apart from Photos and pictures) I tend to use the Details view as this gives useful options to sort your files a number of ways.

> Documents > U3A

Name	Status	Date modified	Type
Computer Club		10/06/2020 14:16	File folder
Coordinators		02/03/2020 14:41	File folder
Digital Photography		20/04/2019 20:42	File folder
Membership		01/03/2020 09:39	File folder
Newsletters		06/06/2020 21:19	File folder
Projector		21/04/2019 18:09	File folder
Virtual Meetings		03/06/2020 11:15	File folder
Virtual Meetings (Non Share)		06/05/2020 17:27	File folder

In this screenshot you can see a small arrowhead in the 'Name' column header. The arrow is pointing upwards meaning that the folders in this view are sorted by name from A to Z. If you clicked the arrow it would change to point downwards and thus sort the folders from Z to A. (Reverse sort).

In the screenshot below. I have clicked on the 'Date Modified' column header and have thus changed the sort order from sorting by folder name to sorting by the date modified. Like before we could click the arrow to change the sort to be in reverse order.

> Documents > U3A >

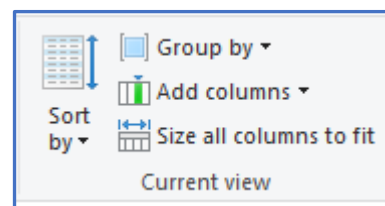
Name	Status	Date modified	Type
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SORTING BY DIFFERENT COLUMN HEADERS AND SPECIFICALLY BY DATE MODIFIED (NEWEST AT THE TOP) IS EXTREMELY USEFUL AND SHOULD BE SECOND NATURE TO YOU.

We are looking at folders here, but the same applies to files within folders.

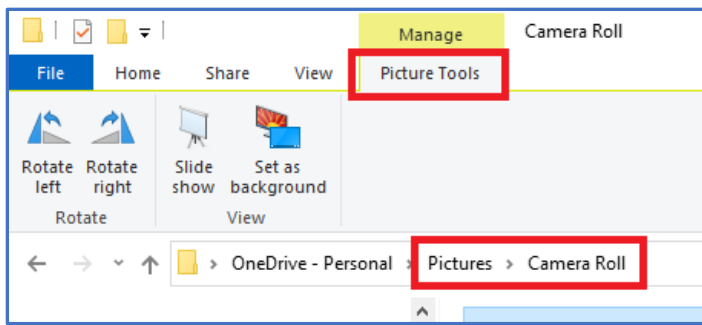
Whilst I have just been clicking the column header to do these sorts. They are available in the "Sort by" section of the "Current View"

In the **Show/hide** section you can choose to either show file name extensions or not and also to show or hide hidden files. I personally prefer to show file extensions although they are off by default as are hidden files. Hidden files are normally only in sub folders of Windows and are files that shouldn't be messed with!

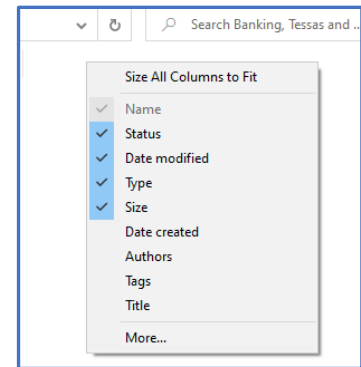


If you click in an empty space to the right of the Column Headers, you can see that you can edit the Columns that you show. A useful one to include and show is the Size attribute (only works for files, not

folders). If you are short on space for example you can sort your files by size and immediately see which ones are using precious disk space.



Some Menu items are context sensitive, as an example if I'm looking in my Pictures folder then there is a "Picture Tools" tab available to use.



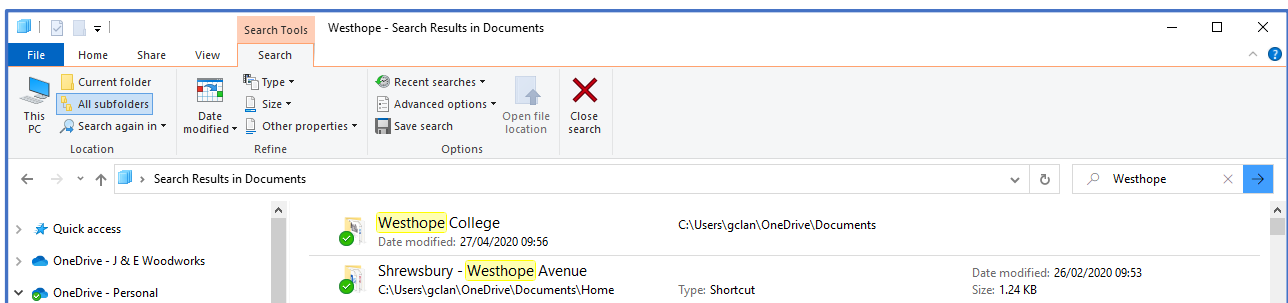
Top Tip. To keep organised I suggest your folder and file structure should either be a Folder with sub folders or a folder with files. Do not mix up files and folders within the same folder.

Cut Copy Paste and Move

Very neatly, you can have multiple instances of File Explorer open (Just press Windows+E again). This makes it easy to carry out housekeeping and file management. My wife for example opens one instance to her Google photo's (where all her photos from her phone end up). She then opens a second instance of File Explorer and clicks and drags from one folder to the other. Pictures of Flowers get moved from the Google Photos folder in the left-hand instance of File Explorer to the Flowers Folder in the Right-hand instance of File Explorer. She might then move on to different pictures of Skies and so on. Note that if you just *left* click and drag a file from one folder to another you *copy* the file so that it will be in both locations. If you *left* click and drag and hold the Shift key at the same time, you *move* the file. If you *right* click and drag, then when you release the mouse button you have an option to either Copy or Move the File(s).

Search

It should be no surprise to you that you can search for files within File Explorer. The Search bar is in the top right, under the Ribbon. Enter a word to search for and press enter. Once you have done this the Ribbon changes to include the Search Tools – all very useful and all pretty much self-explanatory.



The Search also allows use of Wildcards * and ?. Use "*" to find zero or any number of instances and "?" to find a single instance.

Searching for 'Sh*', could represent words like Sheet, Show, She, Shake, Shoes, Shirts and so on. Whilst '?og' would yield Bog, Cog, Dog, Fog, Hog, Jog and '??og' would give words like Clog, Flog, Slog and so on.

Mapped Drives

I mentioned earlier that there is better way to view computers on the network and that is by “Mapped Drives”. I find these really useful and use them all the time. Consider that I am on the computer called “Dylan” and wish to navigate to this file that I am editing on the Tara Computer. The full file path would be:

\\Tara\C on Tara\Users\gclan\OneDrive\Documents\U3A\Computer Club\20220 06 File Explorer.docx

Where “Tara” is the **Computer name**.

“C on Tara” is the **share name**,

and the rest is the **path** to the actual file name.

That’s potentially nine double clicks of my mouse!

We could map the \\Tara\C on Tara\Users\gclan\OneDrive\Documents folder to a spare drive letter. So that I would only have to navigate from the U3A folder downwards. You can see that I have lots of mapped drives from G to X.

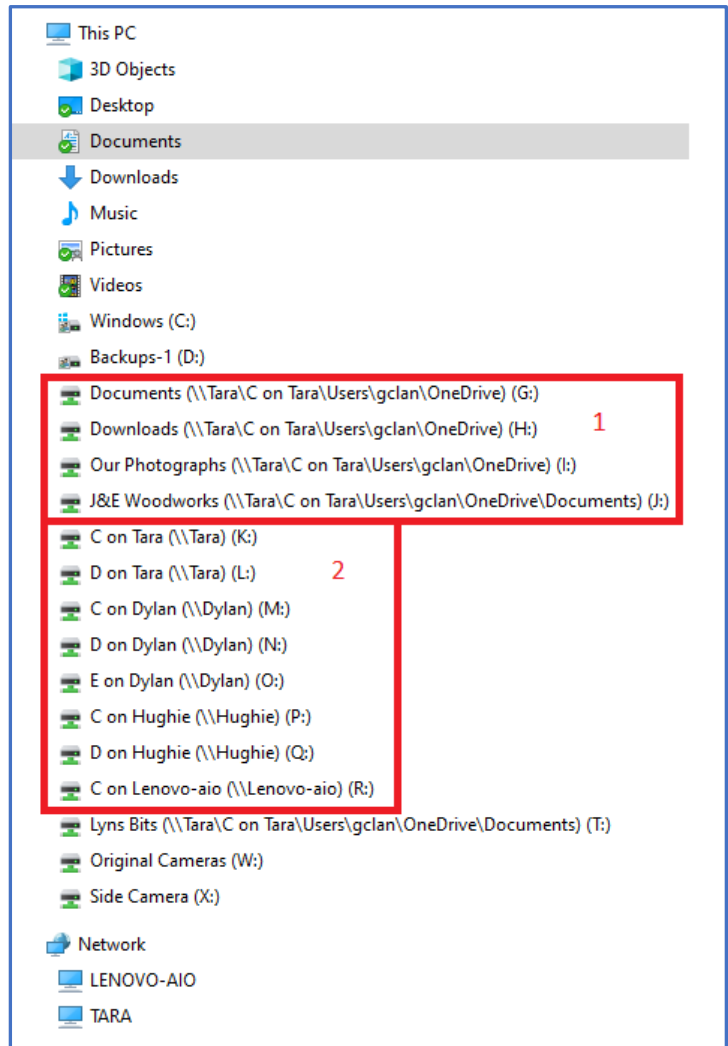
Drives G, H, I & J are all on my one Drive on the main computer.

Drives K to R are all complete drives on the other computers in the house (4 of them).

Drives W and X are links to two of my Raspberry Pi computers.

I use the same mapping on all our computers; thus on any computer I can go to the I drive and immediately see all of Our Photographs.

To use mapped drives, you need to Share the original location and set the appropriate permissions. We will be doing this on our first meeting when we are back at Tesco’s when we explore Home Networking. Mapped drives aren’t for this lesson.



Conclusion

Understanding File Explorer is fundamental to understanding your computer and where to find your files and photos. When you click “Save” on an untitled document, you should know *exactly* where it has been saved or going to be saved.

Using the different views and sorting your files should be second nature.

Good luck.

Geoff Lane

June 2020

Ver 2.0