

It's very easy to accidentally delete a file on your PC. You can throw away days or even weeks of work with just one click of your mouse. Windows of course doesn't immediately delete any files that you have thrown away, but places them in the Recycle Bin, just in case you need to recover them. However, if you have deleted a file and also emptied your Recycle Bin, it is still possible to recover these files with specialised software. In this article you will learn about:

Carl Fuller:
"All is not lost if you have inadvertently deleted a file on your PC and it's not in your Recycle Bin. You can often still recover it."

- How to recover deleted files
- Retrieving files from the Recycle Bin
- Rescuing lost data with professional software tools

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The author of this article, Carl Fuller, used to hold PC repair workshops. He has extensive experience in dealing with all types of PC faults. His knowledge of all repairs and problem-solving makes him an expert in dealing with hardware issues.



Restoring deleted files.

Don't panic!

Look for a Backup (.BAK) file.

Check the Recycle Bin.

Use third party software.

How to Recover Deleted Files

It is so easy to accidentally press the **Delete** key on your keyboard and delete a file. The consequences of losing valuable files could mean that you have to spend days or weeks recreating the data that you have lost.

If you have accidentally deleted a file from your computer, don't panic and begin trying everything you can think of to recover that file. Stay calm and follow the advice in the following table to recover your deleted file:

1.	Check whether the software you created the deleted file with has saved a backup (.BAK) file to your hard drive that you can use to recover your deleted file. Stop working on your computer immediately. Do not save any other work to your hard drive. If you have done any other work after deleting the file you want to recover, you run the risk of overwriting it and losing it completely.
2.	Firstly, try to restore the file from the Recycle Bin. Open the Recycle Bin by double-clicking on its icon and then searching for the file you have deleted. If you can find it, right-click on it and choose Restore from the context menu that opens. This will place the file back in its original location.
3.	If the file you are looking for isn't in the Recycle Bin, you will need to use third party software to recover your deleted file. This software can be downloaded from the Internet, or you can install software from the CD that accompanies this update. However, you should download the software on another computer as otherwise you run the risk of overwriting the file you have deleted.

4.	If you use file recovery software on your computer and do manage to restore your deleted file, you should save this deleted file to another area of your hard drive so that there is no risk of it being overwritten or becoming unstable and lost again.
5.	If your computer is part of a network you should terminate your computer's network connection and isolate it before taking any other action.

Save recovered files to another area of your hard drive.

Isolate your computer if you are on a network.

When you delete a file from your hard drive you are not actually erasing the file itself, but just modifying its name in the file directory that keeps track of the location of all the files and folders on your computer. What happens is that the space that the file was occupying is marked as available for other data. In practice, this means that the file is still completely intact, and can be recovered. It's therefore very important not to save anything else to your hard drive after you have accidentally deleted the file you want to recover, as there is the possibility that this free space will be used. If it is, the file you deleted will be lost completely.

No deleted files are lost until the free disk space is overwritten.

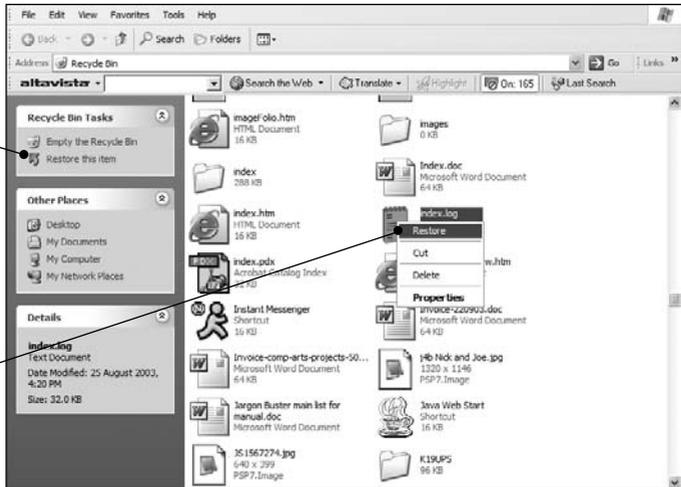
Retrieving Files from the Recycle Bin

Normally, Windows doesn't immediately erase any files that you delete from your computer. They are temporarily transferred into a holding area that is called the Recycle Bin. Your documents will be stored in the Recycle Bin until your Windows settings delete them from this area, or until the storage space in this area becomes full.



Highlight an item and then click Restore this item (Restore in 98/2000) to restore it.

Or, right-click the item and choose Restore from the menu.



Recovering files from the Recycle Bin in Windows XP

The Recycle Bin has limited storage.



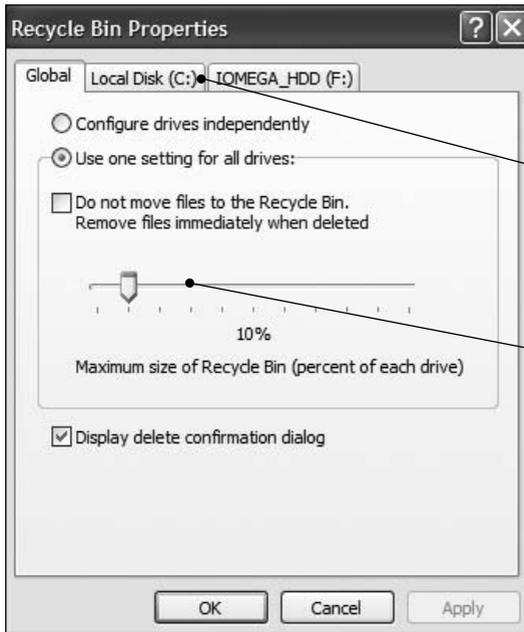
Change the amount of memory that your Recycle Bin uses.

The amount of memory that is allocated to the Recycle Bin is not fixed. You can increase or decrease this to suit your needs. By default, the Recycle Bin is usually set at 10% of your hard drive capacity. To set the amount of memory your Recycle Bin uses, follow these steps:

1. Right-click on the Recycle Bin icon and choose **Properties** from the context menu that appears.
2. Click on the **Global** tab.
3. Use the slider to increase or decrease the amount of memory you want to allocate to your Recycle Bin. This will set the same amount of memory for all hard drive partitions you have. You will also see that you have other tabs labelled (C:), (D:), (E:) etc, depending on how many hard drive partitions you have. If you have more than one hard drive partition set-up, you can independently set the amount of memory that each uses for the files that are moved to the Recycle

Bin. If you want to do this, activate the ‘Configure drives independently’ option on the Global tab. Now click on the hard drive partition tab(s) you may have and move the slider to the amount of memory you want that drive to allocate to the Recycle Bin.

On the Global tab you will also see an option ‘Do not move files to the Recycle Bin. Remove files immediately when deleted’. If you activate this feature any files that you accidentally delete will not be placed in the Recycle Bin, but will be completely erased from your hard drive, so approach this feature with great caution.



Click these tabs to set-up each Recycle Bin on each of your hard drive partitions.

Use the slider to set-up 'global' Recycle Bin settings.

Set-up the Recycle Bin storage space

Regularly empty your Recycle Bin.



Retrieving files from an empty Recycle Bin.

As the Recycle Bin is only of a finite size, it can become full and begin to overflow. If this happens, the next file that you send to the Recycle Bin will replace the oldest one that is currently held there. It's therefore a good idea to periodically empty your Recycle Bin to prevent this from happening.

If you are working with programs that were not designed specifically for Windows such as old MS-DOS programs then you must be more careful when you delete files and folders, as these will not be put in the Recycle Bin and therefore cannot be restored in the usual way.

There may be times when you need to permanently delete data from your hard drive and therefore not send it to the Recycle Bin, for example, when dealing with confidential information. If you are completely sure that the file you wish to delete will never be needed again, select it, hold down the **Shift** key on your keyboard and then press the **Delete** key. The file or folder will now be completely erased from your hard drive.

Rescuing Lost Data with Professional Software Tools

If you have deleted a file and it's also no longer stored in your Recycle Bin, you may be able to retrieve the file. When the Recycle Bin is emptied the files are not deleted immediately, but the space that it used to occupy is marked as being free for overwriting. By using professional tools you can retrieve these files.

However, you should observe the following rules when using these tools:

1.	It is best practice to start the restoration program from a CD or another partition other than the one that contains the deleted file.
2.	Never open the restored file(s) by double-clicking on them. Doing this could damage the file. Save the file(s) in another partition and then run the program they were created with, then attempt to open them.
3.	Don't forget that Windows 2000/XP users must ensure that they have Administrator status on their computers before they begin the restoration process.

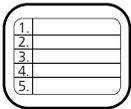
Follow these rules to get the best results from data recovery software packages.

Below are the details of three of the best software data recovery packages. You will find all of this software on the CD that accompanies this update.

Program	Address	Description
Undelete	www.windows-tools.co.uk	Undelete allows you to effortlessly recover lost files from any drive on your computer. It turns your Recycle Bin into a recovery bin that captures all deleted files. (For Windows 2000/XP).
O&O UnErase	www.oo-software.com	Restore files that you have accidentally deleted yourself, or that have been erased as a consequence of a virus attack. (For Windows 2000/XP).

You'll find all of this software on the CD that accompanies this update.

Program	Address	Description
PC Inspector File Recovery	www.pcinspector.de	This free utility allows you to recover any deleted files. It supports all hard drive formats including FAT 12/16/32 and NTFS. (For Windows 98/Me/2000/XP).



It's as easy as clicking your mouse or pressing a key on your keyboard to delete a file. Often this is done completely by accident and can in the worst cases destroy weeks of work. You may also discover that a virus has erased some of your files. However, all is not lost, as a deleted file is not initially erased from your computer. With some specialised software you can recover these lost files and save yourself time and energy recreating the lost data.