

FILE FORMATS

Overview

There are many different types of electronic file formats. The way to identify the file type is by looking at its extension, typically expressed as a dot followed by 2 to 4 letters (.xxx). Why should you care? You need to identify the file type to know whether it will work on your computer and whether you will need a particular type of software program to decompress, play, or view it.

Note: You cannot simply change the extension of a file name to get it to work. As stated above the extensions are linked to and created by particular software programs.

What do particular file extensions mean?

There are hundreds of file extensions. Below, you will find a list of the more popular files extensions and their associated programs licensed to run them.

Microsoft Office

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.doc	MS Word 2003	Microsoft word document. A common PC format for formatted text files. Although you may occasionally come across files with this extension that are not text documents, usually they are documents that were created using Microsoft Word or WordPerfect for Windows.
.dot	Ms Word 2003	Microsoft Word Template
.xls	MS Excel 2003	Microsoft Excel File Format.
.mdb	MS Access 2003	Microsoft Access Database
.ppt	MS PowerPoint 2003	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation.
.pot	MS PowerPoint 2003	Microsoft PowerPoint Template
.pps	MS PowerPoint 2003	Microsoft PowerPoint Show
.txt	MS Word or Notepad 2003	These files can be viewed with a word processor like Microsoft Word. For the PC you can use Notepad, a program that comes with the Windows operating system.
.html .htm	Internet Explorer	Web Page
.pub	MS Publisher 2003	Microsoft

Other

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.pdf	Adobe Acrobat Reader	Portable Document Format, a proprietary format developed by Adobe Systems, Inc. that allows formatted documents (including brochures or other documents containing artwork) to be transferred over the Internet so they look the same on any computer. This file type requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader to view files and can be downloaded from the Adobe website.
.exe	DOS or Windows	A DOS or Windows program or a self-extracting file. If this is an executable (self-extracting) file, then it can usually be launched by double-clicking on the icon on your desktop. This is the only way to tell if it is an executable file.
.zip	WinZIP	A common compression standard for DOS and Windows. These files can be decompressed on the PC with WinZIP

Audio

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.mp3	Windows Media Player	The most popular file format on the Web for distributing CD-quality music. A 1 Mb files is equal to about one minute of music. This type of file requires an MP3 player, which is available for both Macintosh and Windows.
.wav	Windows Media Player	The native sound format for Windows. On the Mac, you can use Sound App to play .wav files. For the PC, use aveform Hold and Modify or Goldwave to play these files. There's also a good program called Win Play! (wplynx.zip) that will play it, as well as other popular formats.
.wma	Windows Media Player.	Short for "Windows Media Audio, this proprietary file format was developed by Microsoft to compete with .mp3. This type of file requires the Windows Media Player.

Video

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.avi	Windows Media Player	The standard video format for Windows.
.mov	QuickTime	The common format for QuickTime movies, the Macintosh native movie platform. Format used for Podcasting videos.
.mpg/mpeg	Windows Media Player	A standard format for "movies" on the Internet, using the MPEG compression scheme. There are a variety of MPEG Players for Windows and an MPEG FTP Site that has a large collection of MPEG player resources for all platforms (Mac, Windows, and UNIX).
.ram	Real Player	A popular format from RealNetworks for streaming video. To view these files, you need the RealPlayer, which can be downloaded from Real.com.
.wmv	Windows Media Player	The common format for Windows Media Players videos.

Graphics

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.gif	Common Browsers	The most common graphics file format on the Internet, it stands for Graphics Interchange Format. Most browsers have a built-in GIF viewer.
.jpg .jpeg	Common Browsers	A popular compression standard used for photos and still images. JPEG files can be viewed on any platform as long as you have a JPEG viewer. You can view JPEG files with most web browsers.
.tif	Major graphics software programs	A very large, high-resolution image format.
.bmp	Microsoft software	Bitmap
.png	Macromedia Fireworks, Adobe Photoshop, Corel PaintShop Pro.	Portable Network Graphics format

Digital Storytelling Software

Extension	Main Program Used	Description
.wp3	Windows Photostory 3	Windows Photostory 3 project file . A project file allows you to edit your photo story at a future time.
.wmv	Windows Photostory 3	Windows Media Video. A Digital Story File or WMV cannot be edited at a future time. It is the finished product .
.MSWMM	Windows Movie Maker	Windows movie Maker project file . A project file allows you to edit your digital story at a future time.
.wmv	Windows Movie Maker	Windows Media Video. A Digital Story File or WMV cannot be edited at a future time. It is the finished product .

