

File Names and File Extensions

What are they?

Why are they?

Working with them.....

Examples:

.bmp	something.bmp	image file (windows)
.doc	something.doc	Word document
.exe	something.exe	executable program/application
.gif	something.gif	image file
.jpg	something.jpg or jpeg	image file
.mdb	something.mdb	Access database
.pdf	something.pdf	Adobe Acrobat file
.ppt	something.ppt	Powerpoint document
.rtf	something.rtf	rich text file
.txt	something.txt	text document
.wav	something.wav	sound file
.xls	something.xls	Excel document
.zip	something.zip	ZIP compressed file (need WinZip or

A File Extension is a just a type of Suffix

History:

Original DOS / Windows used filenames in a format called “8.3” or “8 DOT 3” which have up to 8 characters, a period and 3 more characters like *tomsboat.txt*.

Now, Long File Names are allowed in Windows like *Toms Boat.txt*

But the DOT 3 or .xxx part, or the Extension, remains

– it can also be .xxxx with four characters, like .jpeg

What are the extensions used for?

- 1) If you look at a list of files – as in a Directory or Folder (same thing) it helps you know what kind of file each one is.
- 2) It helps you find files that are similar or to limit file searches to a particular type.
- 3) It directs the computer’s actions.

What computer actions does the File Extension determine?

Start an application or a program directly:

Double click on an .exe file name in a directory.

If it's a .exe file, then the computer knows to Execute the file – that is, start running the program that's in that file.

Click on Start / Run

Type the file name in the box

– even without the extension it will start the program with that file name
(if there is an .exe or .com file with that name)

Double click on a program shortcut.

If the shortcut points to an .exe file, then the computer knows to Execute the file – that is, start running the program that's in that file.

Start an application or a program indirectly (here's where it gets interesting):

Double click on a data / document file like:

- phones.txt
- homework.doc
- Sally.jpg
- checking.xls

The computer will start up a program that will open the data file.

How does it do that?

It looks at the file name *extension* and decides which program is appropriate.

Implications?

It can only decide on one program to open based on the file *extension*.

So, if you have Paint, Print Shop, Photoshop, Internet Explorer, Windows Picture and Fax Viewer, Windows Media Player, etc. etc. they are all capable of opening, for example, .jpg picture files.

Which one does it choose?

Windows chooses the program that is set up in *File Associations*

This list *Associates* a file name extension with a particular program

The Association can be changed (***but really need not be changed unless you have a very annoying situation***):

Open Windows Explorer

Select Tools / Folder Options / File Types

Click on the file type / extension that you want to change

Select Change

Select a different program from the list to be associated with the file.

OK – but changing the file association is kinda complicated. So, what else can I do?

Deciding yourself which program will open the file

Method 1 (you do this all the time!)

Start the program you want to use – this has to happen anyway....

Select File / Open

Find the file you want to Open and proceed to Open it

Method 2 (works on ME and XP, not on NT)

Using My Computer or Windows Explorer, find the file you want to open.

Select / highlight the file

Right click on the file – you will get a menu

Select *Open With*

A list of programs will appear.

Select the one you want to use.

The program will start and will open the file.