Introduction to File Management and Windows 10 File Explorer

Every item stored on your computer is a <u>file</u>. Examples are word processing documents, pictures, videos, audio, programs, and folders.

<u>Folders</u> are a special type of file that contain other files (and even other folders). Note: before Windows, folders were called directories in DOS.

<u>Drives</u> are separate physical devices (usually) that are attached to the computer. Drives contain folders and files and are identified by letters. For example, C: is for the hard drive.

For an analogy, think of your computer as a file cabinet. Each drawer is similar to a drive. Within each drawer, each hanging folder is similar to a computer folder which can contain individual files and/or more folders containing more individual files and/or folders.

The Windows system creates folders and files for its own use when first loaded onto the computer's hard drive (drive C:). It creates a few default folders that are available for the user(s) and application programs to use. Users can then create as many folders and subfolders as desired to organize their files.

Windows 10 File Explorer is the graphical tool for Windows users to view the file folders and files on all the drives attached to the system including portable ones (for example flash or thumb drives). File Explorer is used to make new folders and to copy or move files and folders from one location to another, and to rename or delete files or folders. File Explorer can be used for several more purposes too.

Files and folders should always be given descriptive names that will identify the contents. These names can contain upper and lower case letters and digits. They can also include some special characters and spaces, but it is best to keep these to a minimum. Every filename includes a period followed by the file extension which identifies the type of data in the file and indicates the program used to create it.

Brief Demonstration of File Explorer:

File Explorer can be started in several ways. Two of the simplest are:
1) Click on the File Explorer icon in the Task Bar at the bottom of the screen. (Note: To add the icon to the Task Bar, follow step 2a) below. Then right-click on the File Explorer icon to open another menu. Move the mouse pointer over More to open yet another menu. Click the Pin to taskbar option.
2) a) Click on the Windows Logo in lower left corner of the screen to open the Start menu. b) Click on the File Explorer icon above it (usually the third one up).

Below the menus, ribbon, and search bar are 2 window panes.

1) The one on the left is the Navigation Pane. At the top of the Navigation Pane is the Quick Access section which displays frequently used folders. Below this section are the devices including This PC, the C: drive, and other drives attached to the computer.

2) The larger pane on the right is the Contents Pane. It shows the contents of the item that is selected in the Navigation Pane. Shown are all the folders and files in the selected item with detailed information about each such as Date modified, Type, and Size. The order and type of information displayed in the Contents Pane can be customized by the user. It can look much different on different computers.

The Documents folder is one that is always created by Windows and should not be changed. It is where many of the user files are normally stored. Click on the Documents folder in the Navigation Pane and the Contents Pane shows the folders and files it contains. These have all been created by the user.

Clicking on the greater-than-sign (arrow) in front of the Documents folder in the Navigation Pane will expand to show a list of all the (sub)folders contained in it. Clicking on the greater-than-sign (arrow) in front of any folder in the Navigation Pane will expand the view to show all the folders inside it. Clicking on the down-pointing arrow in front of an expanded folder will collapse the view, hiding its subfolders.

A good way to learn about File Explorer and how to use it is to view YouTube tutorial videos. There are many available, and I recommend the ones listed below. Click the blue underlined links below.

Enjoy!

Helpful YouTube videos about File Management and File Explorer:

1) Computer Skills Course: File Management, Part 1
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-EID5_2D9U (4:01)
2) File Explorer: Working with Files & Folders, A Computer Skills, Simply tutorial: Level 1 Lesson 2
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPtk1kAYEuM (36:32)
3) Windows 10 Working with File Explorer Part 1
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kNTUzjnzeQ (16:42)
4) Windows 10 Tutorial File Explorer in Windows 10 Microsoft Training
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqUAE0o46lw (3:57)

Helpful YouTube video about basic computer concepts:

A Tour of Your Computer, A Computer Skills, Simply tutorial: Level 1 Lesson 1
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSL2ER9QoXM (16:30)