

## Common File Formats

A file format is a standard way that information is encoded for storage in a computer file. It specifies how bits are used to encode information in a digital storage medium. The file format is the structure of a file that tells a program how to display its contents. For example, a Microsoft Word document saved in the .DOC file format is best viewed in Microsoft Word. Sometimes, another program can open the file, but it may not have all the features needed to display the document correctly.

Below is a table of the most common file formats you will encounter while working on a computer:

File type	File extension	Description
text	.doc	Associated with WordPad and other word processing programs, e.g., Microsoft Word
	.docx	Has replaced the .doc extension from Microsoft Word 2007 and later versions
	.pdf	Short for <b>Portable Document Format</b> and developed by Adobe – allows users to capture the native appearance of a document so it can be viewed/printed the same way on any device
	.txt	Used for plaintext text files – documents that contain only text and cannot be formatted
	.rtf	Short for <b>Rich Text Format</b> – documents that have some formatting (bold, italics, etc.) but do not have all the features of a full word processor, e.g., WordPad
image	.bmp	Standard Windows bitmapped graphic image
	.gif	Pronounced <b>jiff</b> and short for <b>Graphics Interchange Format</b> – one of the most common image file formats
	.jpg (JPEG)	Short for <b>Joint Photographic Experts Group</b> – used for digital image compression, especially on digital cameras
	.png	Pronounced as <b>p-n-g</b> or <b>ping</b> and short for <b>Portable Network Graphics</b> – A bitmapped image format that features lossless compression
sound	.mid (MIDI)	Short for <b>Musical Instrument Digital Interface</b> and developed in the 1980s
	.mp3	A compression method that reduces the size of the file while maintaining CD-quality sound
	.wma	Short for <b>Windows Media Audio</b> and developed by Microsoft to encode digital audio files – capable of the same quality as an MP3 with a higher compression rate

	.wav	Created by Microsoft and IBM in the 1990s – an early method of playing audio files but has been replaced by MP3 and WMV
<b>video</b>	.avi	Short for <b>Audio Video Interleave</b> – standard file format for Microsoft Windows video files – maximum size is 2GB
	.mp4	Audio and Video compression standard introduced in 1998 – commonly used for audiobooks and podcasts
	.mpg (MPEG)	Short for <b>Moving Pictures Expert Group</b> – widely used video codec to display video and DVD files
	.wmv	Short for <b>Windows Media Video</b> – compressed video file format developed by Microsoft – supports multiple video codecs for streaming video
<b>program</b>	.exe	An executable file used to perform various functions or operations – cannot be read like a data file as it is compiled
<b>compressed</b>	.zip	A lossless compression binary file format – an archive file format that can combine and compress multiple files into one file, which can later be decompressed to recreate original files