

Activity 09-1: Organizing Files and Folders

Big Idea

Organizing files and folders on your computing devices is an important life skill in our digital world. You can have files on your laptop, phone, network drives, cloud storage and other places. Having a good system to organize your files will help you find them when you need them. When you can't find the files and folders you've created, you may create duplicates and waste network resources. At the very least it can be time-consuming and frustrating.

Materials

- Option 1a: Paper and pencil/pen/marker or a dry-erase board and marker
- Option 1b: word-processing or text-editor application
- Option 2: sticky notes and a space large enough to stick them and organize them, like a wall, desktop, or poster board
- Option 3: paper file folders and scrap paper. Can also include labels, pictures, or CDs/DVDs to represent different media

Vocabulary

File (and file types)

Folder or Directory and Subfolder

Permission/Levels of Access

Leading Caps (also called HumpBack or CamelCase)

Background

Knowing good strategies for organizing files and folders is important for you and for those you work with. Teachers, students, and others are creating dozens if not hundreds or thousands of new files every day both at school and elsewhere. Some of those files have to be available for others to use and others should have limited access.

Consider the situation of a teacher preparing materials to be used to support the classes they teach. There are some documents that are organizational that the teacher may share with other teachers. Examples are pacing guides, calendars, lesson plans, and others. Teachers also create files to share with students, like lesson presentations, handouts, worksheets, and



materials for projects. Teachers also create files that should not be shared with others. These may include documents about the needs of individual students or reports of their accomplishments. Any of these files may be text, images, videos, or a combination of different media. Think about all of the files necessary to create the materials for one lesson, and how many students will access them and create additional files for every lesson they work on.

Folders, also called Directories, and Subfolders should be organized and named logically. Files should also be named logically and consistently and placed in the correct folders. Levels of access (permission levels for who can access material) can be set at the individual document level or at different folder levels.

Folders should be named for key areas in which you work. For example, a student may organize folders based on their classes and then have subfolders for different types of work in those classes or could create subfolders based on the different projects or topics covered in the classes. A teacher may have folders for classes but may also have more general folders for teaching resources, important school files, and extracurricular activities or clubs they may be responsible for.

When you're naming files and folders, there are some suggestions for making them easier to find and keep organized. Consider the following:

- **Include a date in the name.** If you add a date at the BEGINNING of a file--starting with the YEAR--then your files will automatically be sorted chronologically. You can often sort files in forward or reverse chronological order with the click of a button. Be sure to use two digits for days and months, like 01 for January, or they won't sort correctly when you get to October through December.
- **Use descriptive keywords.** You might have lots of folders and files for "projects," "homework," or in subjects like "math," so be specific. Use keywords you would use to search. For example, "GenomeProject" will be easier to find than just "Projects." And avoid generic keywords or system words, like "file" or "doc."
- **Use leading caps.** In early systems, spaces and many special characters (e.g., !, %, &, /) weren't allowed in names. Modern filing systems can often support spaces and many (but not all) special characters. (Your device will tell you when you are trying to use an unsupported character.) When you combine multiple keywords in a file or folder name, capitalize the first letter of each keyword, whether you include spaces or not. Capitalizing the first letter of each word is referred to as leading caps, HumpBack, or CamelCase. Spaces will make a name longer and could make it harder to find the specific file you need. Running words together with leading caps saves characters in your names.
- **Identify important files.** Some operating systems or file storage systems allow you to use labels, colors, or icons to indicate files or folders you use often. Another trick to sort files or folders is to add a special character, like _ , - , or ! at the beginning of the file



name. This will move the file to the top of the directory. Likewise, adding Z or ZZ at the beginning of a file name will move it to the bottom of the directory.

Activity Directions

1. Determine a scenario for a teacher in your school and brainstorm a list of the types of files and folders they might generate. You can think about a project you completed for a recent class, or turn to your Tech Team coordinator. What projects have they had you and the Tech Team work on recently? Start simple.
 - a. Consider folders and files used for planning or organizing information for the project.
 - b. Think about the variety of media that might be used. Images or videos might be kept in separate Library directories.
 - c. Identify the different people who have to access some of the files or folders but not others. For example, a Social Studies teacher might share lesson plans with other Social Studies teachers in the school or district. Some lesson files might be accessed only by the teacher while others have to be accessible to students--and students in multiple classrooms.
2. Map out all of the necessary folders, subfolders, and files for the project. You can do this in different ways:
 - a. Create an outline with paper and pencil or in a digital document.
 - b. Put different colored sticky notes on a wall, whiteboard, or poster board to represent folders, file types, and who can access them. Indent sticky notes to indicate subfolders or files inside of folders.
 - c. Use actual paper file folders and files (paper documents, printed pictures, placeholders for other media) in a file box or drawer.
3. Label each folder and file (e.b., the bullet points in an outline, the sticky notes, or the folders and paper) with an appropriate path and logical file name.
4. Consider replicating your folder/file structure on a device.

