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Summary

When you try to access or work with files and folders in Windows, you experience one or more of the following issues:

- Issue 1: You receive an "Access Denied" error message or a similar message.
- Issue 2: You cannot access, change, save, or delete files and folders.
- Issue 3: You cannot open a file or folder after you install a new version of Windows.

Resolution

To resolve a particular issue, follow the steps for the issue that best describes your situation. Use the method for your version of Windows.

Note You may not always receive an "Access Denied" error message for these kinds of issues. If particular steps do not resolve the issue, try a different set of steps.

Issue 1: I receive an "Access Denied" error message when I try to access or work with files and folders ^

Cause An "Access Denied" error message can occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- The folder ownership has changed.
- You do not have the appropriate permissions.
- The file is encrypted.

Resolution

Windows 8

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 8 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files or folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold the folder that you want to take ownership of, then tap **Properties**. (If you are using a mouse, right-click the folder, and then click **Properties**.)
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab, tap or click **Advanced**, then tap or click **Change**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or for confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
3. Type the name of the person that you want to give ownership to, and then click **Check Names**.

Note The account name for the person that you are assigning ownership to is displayed.

4. Click **OK**.
5. If you want this person to be the owner of the files and subfolders that are contained in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You may not have the appropriate permissions Issues that you experience when you try to access files and folders may be related to permissions. Permissions are rules that determine whether you can access or change files and folders. To check permissions on a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, tap or click your name to see the permissions that you have.

To open a file, you have to have the Read permission. To change the permissions of a file or folder, follow these steps.

Important You must be logged on as an administrator to change permissions on files and folders.

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then tap or click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, tap or click your name to see the permissions that you have.
4. Tap or click **Edit**, tap or click your name, select the check boxes for the permissions that you must have, and then click **OK**.

The file or folder may be encrypted Encryption can help protect files and folders from unwanted access. You cannot open an encrypted file or folder without the certificate that was used to encrypt it. To determine whether a file or folder is encrypted, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then tap or click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **General** tab, and then tap or click **Advanced**.

If the **Encrypt contents to secure data** check box is selected, you have to have the certificate that was used to encrypt the file or folder to be able to open it. In this situation, you should obtain the certificate from the person who created or encrypted the file or folder, or have that person decrypt the file or folder.

Windows 7

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 7 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files or folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the folder that you want to take ownership of, then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **Security** tab, click **Advanced**, then click the **Owner** tab.
3. Click **Edit**.

Note If you are prompted for an administrator password or for confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.

4. Click the name of the person that you want to give ownership to.
5. If you want this person to be the owner of files and subfolders in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You may not have the appropriate permissions Issues that you experience when you try to access files and folders may be related to permissions. Permissions are rules that determine whether you can access or change files and folders. To determine the permissions of the file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file or folder, then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, click your name to see the permissions that you have.

To open a file, you have to have the Read permission. To change permissions on a file or folder, follow these steps.

Important You must be logged on as an administrator to change permissions on files and folders.

1. Right-click the file or folder, and then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, click your name to see the permissions that you have.

4. Click **Edit**, click your name, select the check boxes for the permissions that you must have, and then click **OK**.

For more information about permissions, see [What are permissions?](#).

The file or folder may be encrypted Encryption can help protect files and folders from unwanted access. You cannot open an encrypted file or folder without the certificate that was used to encrypt it. To determine whether a file or folder is encrypted, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file or folder, and then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **General** tab, then click **Advanced**.

If the **Encrypt contents to secure data** check box is selected, you have to have the certificate that was used to encrypt the file or folder to be able to open it.

You should obtain the certificate from the person who created or encrypted the file or folder, or have that person decrypt the file or folder.

For more information, see [Import or export certificates and private keys](#).

Issue 2: I cannot access, change, save, or delete files and folders



Cause A problem that prevents you from accessing or working with files and folders can occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- The folder ownership has changed
- You do not have the appropriate permissions
- The file is encrypted
- The file is corrupted
- The user profile is corrupted

Resolution

Windows 8

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 8 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have

changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files or folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold the folder that you want to take ownership of, then tap **Properties**. (If you are using a mouse, right-click the folder, and then click **Properties**.)
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab, tap or click **Advanced**, then tap or click **Change**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or for confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
3. Type the name of the person that you want to give ownership to, and then click **Check Names**.

Note The account name for the person that you are assigning ownership to is displayed.

4. Click **OK**.
5. If you want this person to be the owner of the files and subfolders that are contained in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You may not have the appropriate permissions Issues that you experience when you try to access files and folders may be related to permissions. Permissions are rules that determine whether you can access or change files and folders. To check permissions on a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, tap or click your name to see the permissions that you have.

To open a file, you have to have the Read permission. To change the permissions of a file or folder, follow these steps.

Important You must be logged on as an administrator to change permissions on files and folders.

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then tap or click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, tap or click your name to see the permissions that you have.
4. Tap or click **Edit**, tap or click your name, select the check boxes for the permissions that you must have, and then click **OK**.

For more information about permissions, see [What are permissions?](#).

The file or folder may be encrypted Encryption can help protect files and folders from unwanted access. You cannot open an encrypted file or folder without the certificate that was used to encrypt it. To determine whether a file or folder is encrypted, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then tap or click **Properties**.
2. Tap or click the **General** tab, and then tap or click **Advanced**.

If the **Encrypt contents to secure data** check box is selected, you have to have the certificate that was used to encrypt the file or folder to be able to open it. In this situation, you should obtain the certificate from the person who created or encrypted the file or folder, or have that person decrypt the file or folder.

The file or folder may be corrupted Files can become corrupted for several reasons. The most common reason is that you have a file open when your computer crashes or loses power. Most corrupted files cannot be repaired. In this situation, you should either delete the file or restore the file from a backup copy.

For more information about corrupted files and how to fix them, see [Corrupted files: frequently asked questions](#).

Your local user profile may be corrupted Occasionally, Windows might not read your local user profile correctly. This may prevent you from accessing files and folders. In this situation, you may have to use a new local user profile. To create the profile, you must first create a local user account. When the new account is created, the profile is also created. To create a local user account, follow these steps:

1. Swipe from the right edge of the screen, tap **Settings**, and then tap **Change PC settings**. (If you are using a mouse, point to the upper-right corner of the screen, move the mouse pointer down, click **Settings**, and then click **Change PC settings**)
2. In the navigation pane, tap or click **Users**.

3. Tap or Click **Add a User**, then tap or click **Can they sign in without a Microsoft account?**
4. Tap or click **Local account**.
5. Enter your new account name.
6. If you want to use a password, enter and verify the password that you want to use. If you decide not to use a password, tap or click **Next** without entering a password.
7. Tap or click **Finish**.

Windows 7

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 7 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files or folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the folder that you want to take ownership of, and then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **Security** tab, click **Advanced**, and then click the **Owner** tab.
3. Click **Edit**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or for confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
4. Click the name of the person that you want to give ownership to.
5. If you want that person to be the owner of files and subfolders in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You may not have the appropriate permissions Issues that you experience when you try to access files and folders may be related to permissions. Permissions are rules that determine whether you can access or change files and folders. To check permissions on a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold or right-click the file or folder, and then click **Properties**.

2. Tap or click the **Security** tab.
3. Under **Group or user names**, tap or click your name to see the permissions that you have.

To open a file, you have to have the Read permission. To change permissions on a file or folder, follow these steps.

Important You must be logged on as an administrator to change permissions on files and folders.

1. Right-click the file or folder, and then click Properties.
2. Click the Security tab.
3. Under Group or user names, click your name to see the permissions you have.
4. Click Edit, click your name, select the check boxes for the permissions that you must have, and then click OK.

For more information about permissions, see [What are permissions?](#).

The file or folder may be encrypted Encryption can help protect files and folders from unwanted access. You cannot open an encrypted file or folder without the certificate that was used to encrypt it. To determine whether a file or folder is encrypted, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the file, then click Properties.
2. Click the General tab, and then click Advanced.

If the **Encrypt contents to secure data** check box is selected, you have to have the certificate that was used to encrypt the file or folder to be able to open it.

You should obtain the certificate from the person who created the file. For more information, see [Import or export certificates and private keys](#).

The file or folder may be corrupted Files can become corrupted for several reasons. The most common reason is that you have a file open when your computer crashes or loses power. Most corrupted files cannot be repaired. In this situation, you should either delete the file or restore the file from a backup copy.

For more information about corrupted files and how to fix them, see [Corrupted files: frequently asked questions](#).

Your user profile may be corrupted Occasionally, Windows might not read your local user profile correctly. This may prevent you from accessing files and folders. In this situation, you may have to use a new local user profile. To create the profile, you must first create a local user account. When the new account is created, the profile is also created.

For more information about how to create user profiles, see [Fix a corrupted user profile](#). After the new user profile is created, you can copy your existing user files to the new profile so that you can access them.

Issue 3: I cannot open a file or folder after I upgrade to a new version of Windows



Cause Problems that prevent you from accessing files and folders after you upgrade to a new version of Windows can occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- The folder ownership has changed.
- The files are being stored in a Windows.old folder from your previous system.

Resolution

Windows 8

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 8 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files and folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Press and hold the folder that you want to take ownership of, then tap **Properties**. (If you are using a mouse, right-click the folder, and then click **Properties**.)
2. Tap or click the **Security** tab, tap or click **Advanced**, then tap or click **Change**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or for confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
3. Type the name of the person that you want to give ownership to, and then click **Check Names**.

Note The account name for the person that you are assigning ownership to is displayed.

4. Click **OK**.
5. If you want this person to be the owner of the files and subfolders that are contained in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You have to recover files from the Windows.old folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 8 from an earlier version of Windows, and you did not reformat the hard disk, you might still be able to access your old files from the Windows.old folder.

To fix this problem automatically, click the **Fix it** button or link. In the **File Download** dialog box, click **Run**, and then follow the steps in the Fix it Wizard. If you prefer to fix this problem yourself, go to the "Let me fix it myself" section.

Fix it for me

Notes

- This wizard may be in English only. However, the automatic fix also works for other language versions of Windows.
- If you are not on the computer that has the problem, save the Fix it solution to a flash drive or a CD, and then run it on the computer that has the problem.

Let me fix it myself To manually retrieve the files, follow these steps:

1. Open the desktop, tap the folder icon, and then click **Computer**. Or, press the Windows logo key+E.
2. Double-tap or double-click the drive that Windows is installed on (typically, drive C).
3. Double-tap or double-click the Windows.old folder.
4. Double-tap or double-click the Users folder.
5. Double-tap or double-click your user name.
6. Open the folders that contain the files that you want to retrieve. For example, to retrieve files in the Documents folder, double-tap or double-click Documents.

7. Copy the files that you want from each folder and paste them to a folder in Windows
8. For example, if you want to retrieve everything from the Documents folder, copy all the files and folders from the Documents folder in the Windows.old folder, and then paste them to the Documents library in Windows 8.

8. Repeat steps 5-7 for each user account on your computer.

For more information about how to recover data from an earlier version of Windows, see [Recover lost or deleted files](#).

Windows 7

You may not have ownership of a file or folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 7 from an earlier version of Windows, some of your account information may have changed. Therefore, you may no longer have ownership of some files and folders. You might be able to resolve this issue by restoring your ownership of the files and folders.

To take ownership of a file or a folder, follow these steps:

1. Right-click the folder that you want to take ownership of, and then click **Properties**.
2. Click the **Security** tab, click **Advanced**, and then click the **Owner** tab.
3. Click **Edit**. If you are prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation.
4. Click the name of the person that you want to give ownership to.
5. If you want that person to be the owner of files and subfolders in this folder, select the **Replace owner on subcontainers and objects** check box.
6. Click **OK**.

You may have to recover files from the Windows.old folder If you recently upgraded your computer to Windows 7 from an earlier version of Windows, and you did not reformat your hard disk, you might still be able to access your old files from the Windows.old folder.

To fix this problem automatically, click the **Fix it** button or link. In the **File Download** dialog box, click **Run**, and then follow the steps in the Fix it Wizard.If you prefer to fix this problem yourself, go to the "Let me fix it myself" section.

Fix it for me

Notes

- This wizard may be in English only. However, the automatic fix also works for other language versions of Windows.
- If you are not on the computer that has the problem, save the Fix it solution to a flash drive or a CD, and then run it on the computer that has the problem.

Let me fix it myself To manually retrieve the files, follow these steps:

1. Click **Start**, then click **Computer**.
2. Double-click the drive that Windows is installed on (typically, drive C).
3. Double-click the Windows.old folder.
4. Double-click the Users folder.
5. Double-click your user name.
6. Open the folders that contain the files that you want to retrieve. For example, to retrieve files in the Documents folder, double-click **Documents**.
7. Copy the files that you want from each folder and paste them to a folder in Windows 7. For example, if you want to retrieve everything from the Documents folder, copy all the files and folders from the Documents folder in the Windows.old folder, and then paste them to the Documents library in Windows 7.
8. Repeat steps 5-7 for each user account on your computer.

For more information about how to recover data from an earlier version of Windows, see [Recover lost or deleted files](#).



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