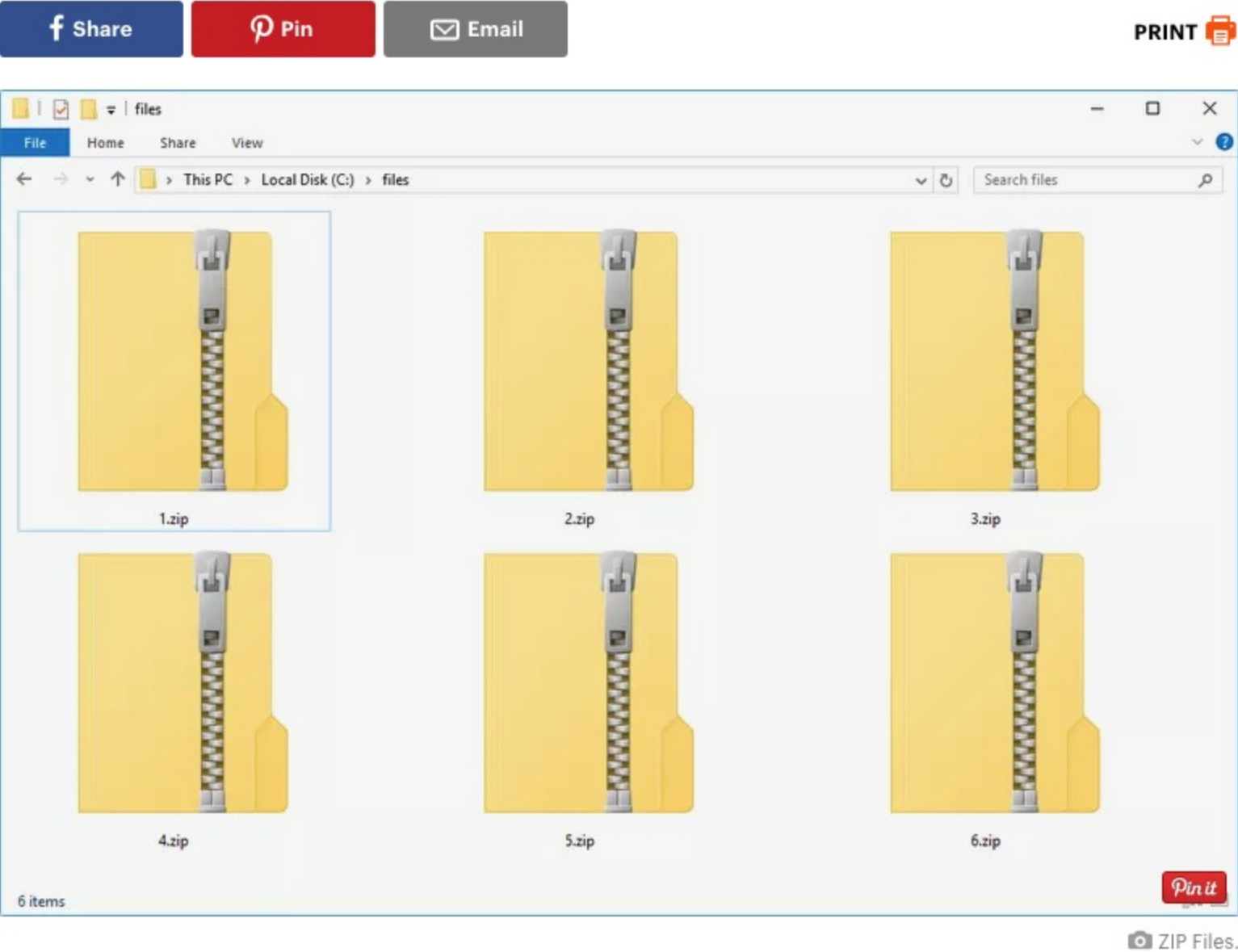


What Is a ZIP File?

How to open, edit, and convert ZIP Files



ZIP Files.



Windows

Key Concepts

File Types

Computer Concepts

Command Line

Basics

Guides & Tutorials

Installing & Upgrading

Tips & Tricks

by [Tim Fisher](#)

Updated March 06, 2018

A file with the ZIP [file extension](#) is a ZIP Compressed file and is the most widely used archive format you'll run into.

A ZIP file, like other archive file formats, is simply a collection of one or more files and/or folders but is compressed into a single file for easy transportation and compression.

The most common use for ZIP files is for [software](#) downloads. *Zip*ping a software program saves storage space on the server, decreases the time it takes for you to download it to your computer, and keeps the hundreds or thousands of files nicely organized in the single ZIP file.

Another example can be seen when downloading or sharing dozens of photos. Instead of sending each image individually over email or saving each image one by one from a website, the sender can put the files in a ZIP archive so that only one file needs to be transferred.

How to Open a ZIP File

The easiest way to open a ZIP file is to double-click on it and let your computer show you the folders and files contained inside. In most [operating systems](#), including Windows and macOS, ZIP files are handled internally, without the need for any extra software.

However, there are *many* compression/decompression tools that can be used to open (and create!) ZIP files. There's a reason they're commonly referred to as zip/unzip tools!

Including Windows, just about all programs that *unzip* ZIP files also have the ability to *zip* them; in other words, they can compress one or more files into the ZIP format. Some can also encrypt and password protect them. If I had to recommend one or two, it'd be [PeaZip](#) or [7-Zip](#), both excellent and completely free programs that support the ZIP format.

If you'd rather not use a program to open a ZIP file, lots of online services support the format, too. Online services like [WOBBZIP](#), [Files2Zip.com](#), and [B1 Online Archiver](#) let you simply upload your ZIP file to see all the files inside, and then download one or more of them individually.

Note: I recommend using an online ZIP opener only if the ZIP file is on the small side. Uploading a large ZIP file and managing it online will probably take you more time and energy than just downloading and installing an offline tool like 7-Zip.

You can also open a ZIP file on most mobile devices. iOS users can install [iZip](#) for free, and Android users should be able to work with ZIP files via [B1 Archiver](#) or [7Zipper](#).

Opening Other Kinds of ZIP Files

ZIPX files are Extended Zip files that are created by and opened with [WinZip](#) version 12.1 and newer, as well as PeaZip and some other similar archive software.

If you need help opening a .ZIP.CPGZ file, see [What Is a CPGZ File?](#).

How to Convert a ZIP File

Files can only be converted to something of a similar format. For example, you can't convert an image file like [JPG](#) into an [MP4](#) video file, anymore than you can convert a ZIP file to [PDF](#) or [MP3](#).

If this is confusing, remember that ZIP files are just containers that hold compressed versions of the actual file(s) you're after. So if there are files *inside* a ZIP file that you want to convert—like for a PDF to [DOCX](#) or MP3 to [AC3](#)—you must first extract the files using one of the methods described in the section above, and *then* convert *those* extracted files with a [file converter](#).

Since ZIP is an archive format, you can easily convert ZIP to [RAR](#), [7Z](#), [ISO](#), [TGZ](#), [TAR](#), or any other compressed file, in two ways, depending on size:

If the ZIP file is small, I highly recommend using the [Convert.Files](#) or [Online-Convert.com](#) free online ZIP converter. These work just like the online ZIP openers already described, which means you'll need to upload the whole ZIP to the website before it can be converted.

To convert larger ZIP files that would take much longer to upload to a website, you can use [Zip2ISO](#) to convert ZIP to ISO or [IZarc](#) to convert ZIP to lots of different archive formats.

If none of those methods work, try one of these [Free File Converters for Occasionally Used Formats](#) to convert the ZIP file to another file format. The one I particularly like is [Zamzar](#), which can convert ZIP to 7Z, TAR.BZ2, YZ1, and other archive formats.

More Information on ZIP Files

If you've password protected a ZIP file but then forgot the password, you can use a [password cracker](#) to remove it to regain access to your files.

One free program that uses brute force to remove a ZIP password is [ZIP Password Cracker Pro](#).

Some ZIP files may have a file name with a different file extension before the final "zip" extension. Just keep in mind, like with any type of file, it's always the *very last extension* that defines what the file is.

For example, *Photos.jpg.zip* is still a ZIP file because JPG comes *before* ZIP. In this example, the archive is probably named this way so it's quick and easy to identify that there are JPG images inside the archive.

A ZIP file can be as small as 22 bytes and as large as around 4 GB. This 4 GB limit applies to both the compressed and uncompressed size of any file inside the archive, as well as to the total size of the ZIP file.

ZIP's creator Phil Katz' PKWARE Inc. has introduced a new ZIP format called ZIP64 that raises the size limitation to 16 EiB (around 18 million [TB](#)). See the [ZIP File Format Specification](#) for more details.

Was this page helpful?