Text file

A **text file** (sometimes spelled "textfile": an old alternative name is "flatfile") is a kind of computer file that is structured as a sequence of lines of electronic text. A text file exists within a computer file system. The end of a text file is often denoted by placing one or more special characters, known as an end-of-file marker, after the last line in a text file. However, on some popular operating systems such as Windows or Linux, text files do not contain any special EOF character.

"Text file" refers to a type of container, while plain text refers to a type of content. Text files can contain plain text, but they are not limited to such.

At a generic level of description, there are two kinds of computer files: text files and binary files.[1]

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Because of their simplicity, text files are commonly used for storage of information. They avoid some of the problems encountered with other file formats, such as endianness, padding bytes, or differences in the number of bytes in a machine word. Further, when data corruption occurs in a text file, it is often easier to recover and continue processing the remaining contents. A disadvantage of text files is that they usually have a low entropy, meaning that the information occupies more storage than is strictly necessary.

A simple text file needs no additional metadata to assist the reader in interpretation, and therefore may contain no data at all, which is a case of zero byte file.