

Windows File Explorer

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When using your Windows 10 system to create information. Over time, we accumulate a lot of files that are stored on our hard disk. A critical part of how Windows 10 (and Windows in general) does this is by using a File System that manages how files are stored and accessed on your computer. The part you and I see, when we interact with the files we create on our computers, such as documents, audio files, pictures, and videos is the File Manager. In the case of Windows, it's File Explorer. Over the years, this essential part of the Windows experience has evolved from its roots as File Manager in early releases, then Windows Explorer, and now called File Explorer which was first introduced in Windows 8.

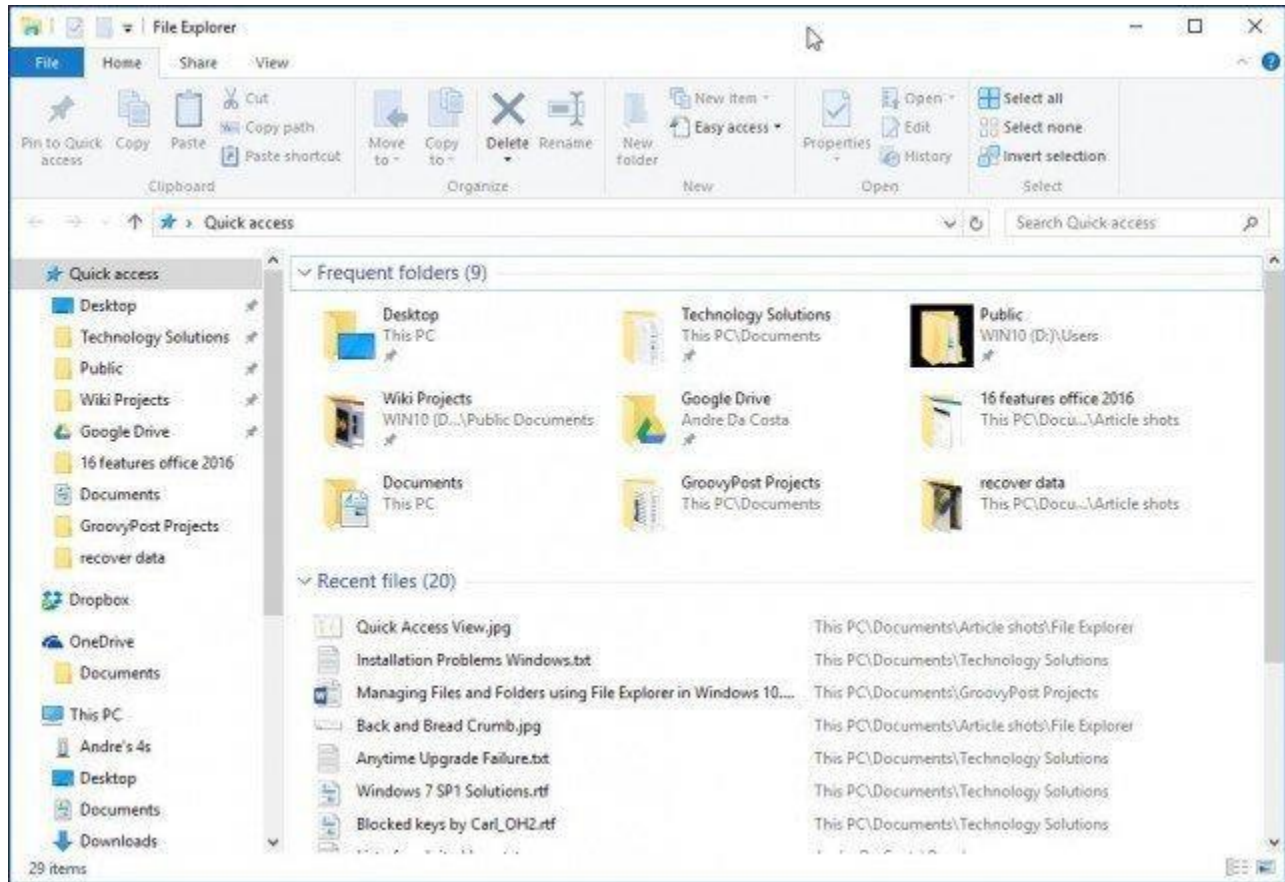
Since a lot of you are coming from Windows 7 and skipped Windows 8.x completely, we thought you'd like to take a look at using File Explorer in Windows 10.

Using File Explorer in Windows 10

To see what's stored on your computer click the *File Explorer* icon located on your Taskbar or click *Start > File Explorer*.



When you launch File Explorer in Windows 10, you are presented within the *Quick access* window. Formally called Favorites in previous versions of Windows; here you will see your most frequently accessed folders and files you created.



File Explorer is used for a variety of tasks, in addition to management and organization of files and folders, it's also used to view and manage the resources of your computer such as internal, attached storage, and optical drives.

Quick Access Toolbar Here you can pin your most frequently accessed commands. Quick Access also automatically pins your most frequently accessed folders. If you are familiar with Microsoft Office or apps such as Paint and WordPad, the Ribbon toolbar command is used to manage your files and reveals often hidden commands quickly. When you select a file or folder, this will display a contextual tab with additional options. You can copy, move, delete, rename and host of other task using the Ribbon.

Ribbon Toolbar You can use these to easily navigate through a folder hierarchy or back and forward between folders. The Address bar also has a bread crumb menu that makes it easy to navigate to different folder path.

Navigation and Address Bar Here you can find your most frequently accessed folders and you the ones you pin which is a new feature in Windows 10.

Quick Access OneDrive If you have a Microsoft Account setup with your Windows 10 PC, you can have your

synced folders files stored in the online storage service and have them synced to your computer.

This PC

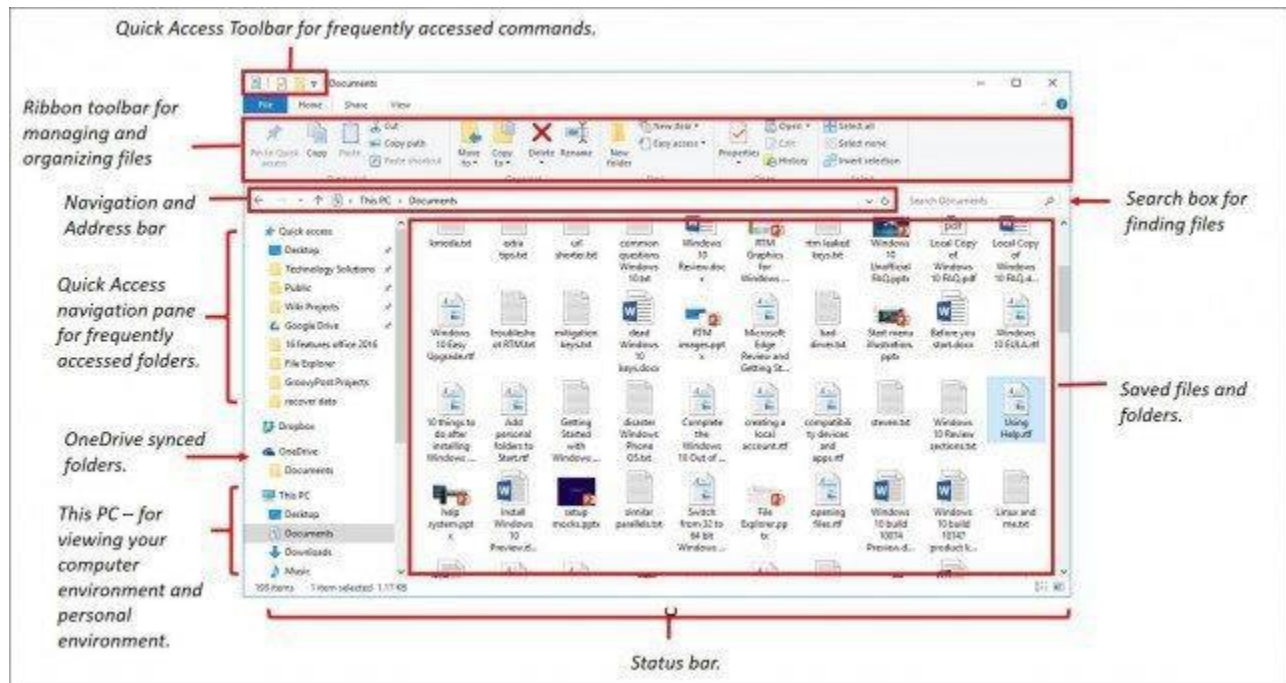
In previous versions of Windows, this was called Computer Explorer. Here you can view and manage your internal storage and attached storage devices including optical media.

Search

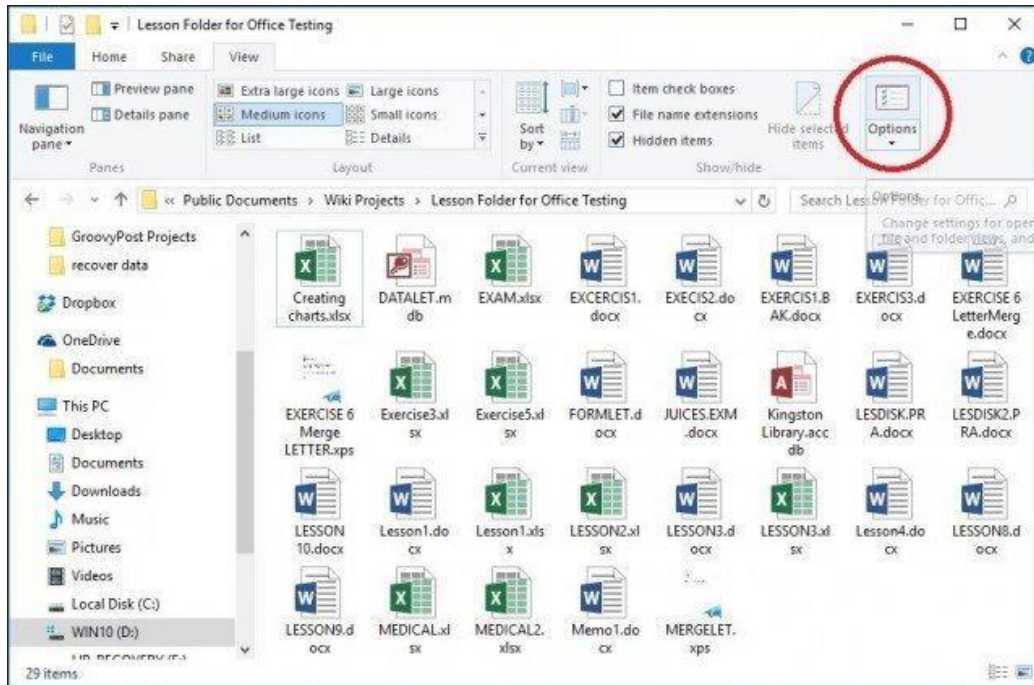
Use the search command to find files stored with the current folder.

Displays information about the contents stored in the window, such the amount of

Status bar files, size, file selection and quick access to folder layout.



If you would rather see your computer environment now called This PC, click it in the left pane, or you can change it to the default from the *Folder Options* dialogue. To do so, click the *View* tab on the Ribbon and click *Options* under *Show/Hide* group.



Click in the *Open File Explorer to:* list box and select *This PC* then click *Apply* and *OK*.

If you don't like to see your most frequently access folders and recently access files, you can adjust those settings from the same dialog. Under Privacy, uncheck the following:

- Show recently used files in Quick access.
- Show frequently used folders folders in Quick access

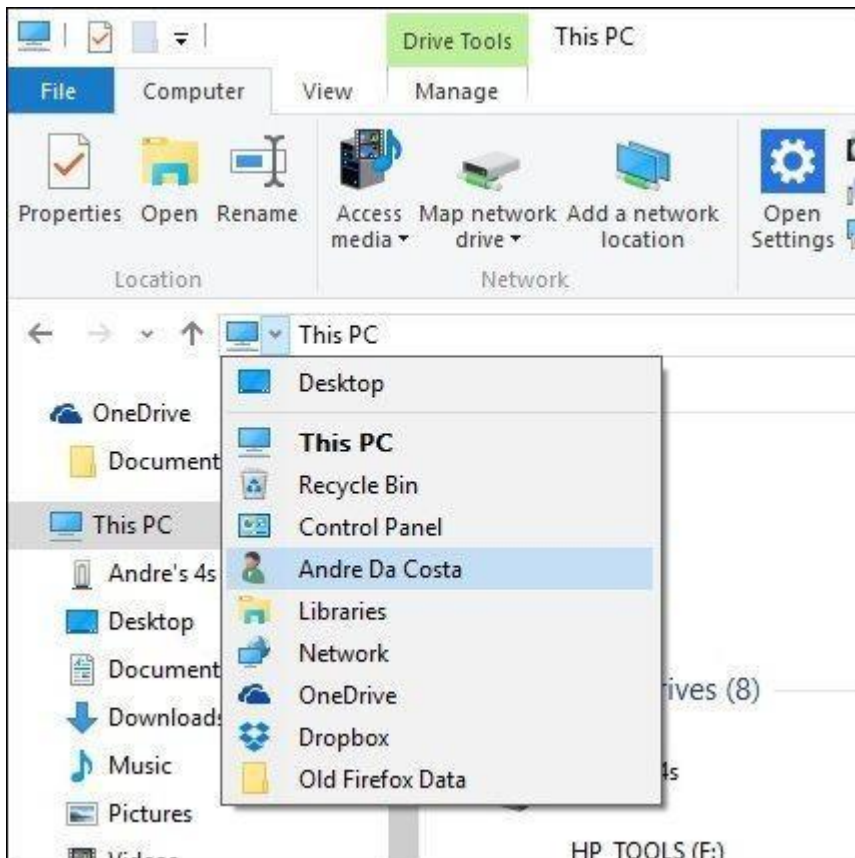
Or you can choose to clear all traces by clicking the *Clear* button.



User Folder

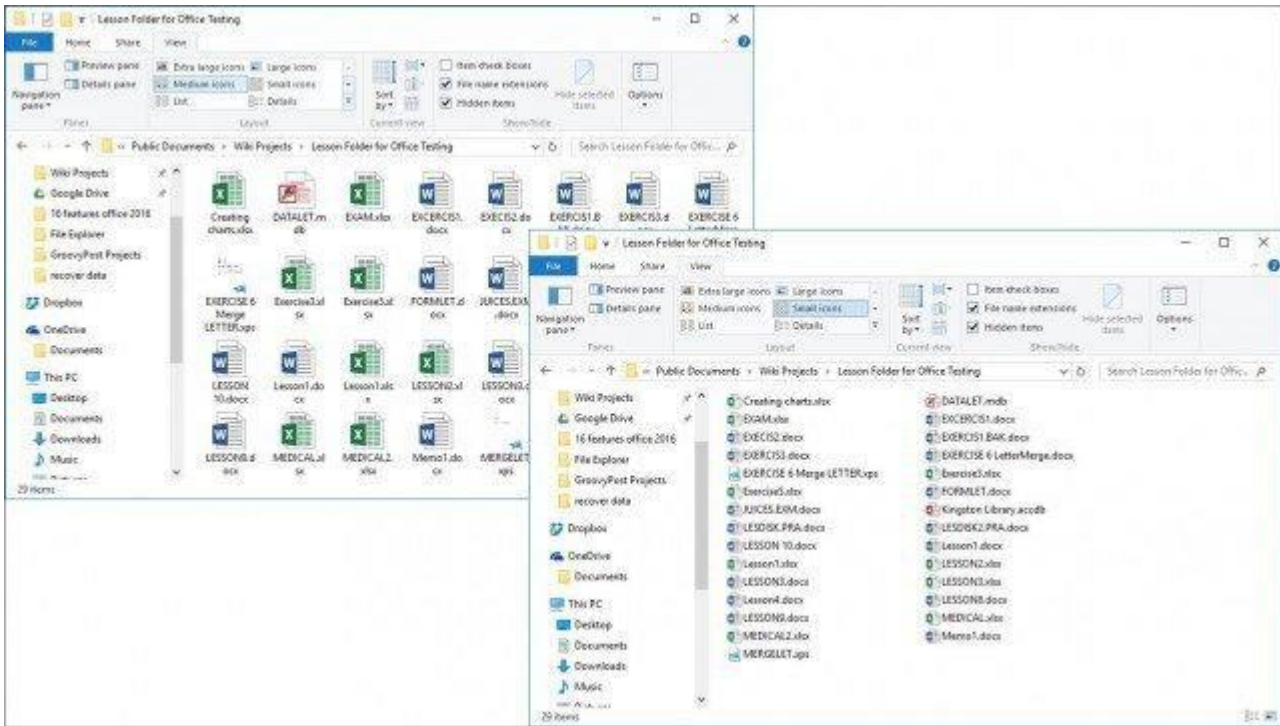
In Windows 7 and earlier versions, you had a User folder directory which was used to store and organize your files in folders by content, such as Documents, Audio files, Pictures, Videos and other types of data. Some of these folders can still be accessed from **This PC**. Other folders that might be part of your User Folder created by third-party applications can be accessed from within your user directory from the Bread Crumb menu.

To do that, click the arrow within the address bar (see above) and click your user folder represented by your account name. Or, press **Windows key + R**, then **type:** `%userprofile%` and hit Enter.



Change how Files are Displayed in Windows 10 File Explorer

You can change how your files look by using the View tab. When you activate this tab, you will see various groups for changing the layout of the window, files, current view or hide certain things you see on screen. Within the Layout group, click one of the available options to change how your files are displayed on screen. You can also preview the layout before confirming by hovering one of the available options.



File Explorer provides different ways to view your files

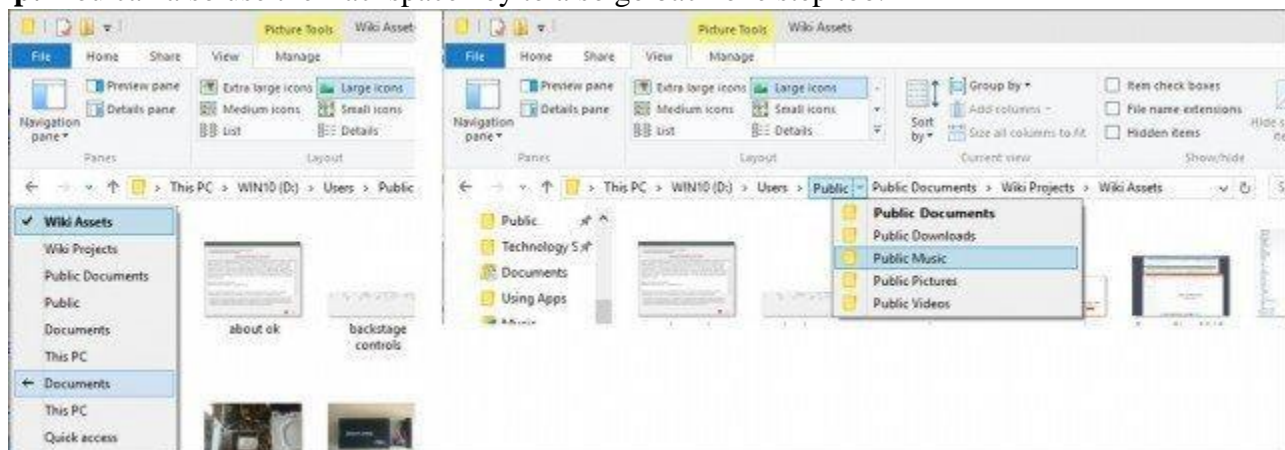
Go Back to a Previous Folder

If you would like to navigate to a previous folder, you can do this a couple ways efficiently using either Recent Locations button or the Bread Crumb menu.

When you click the Recent Locations menu, you can go back to a previously working directory quickly without going through multiple directories along the way.

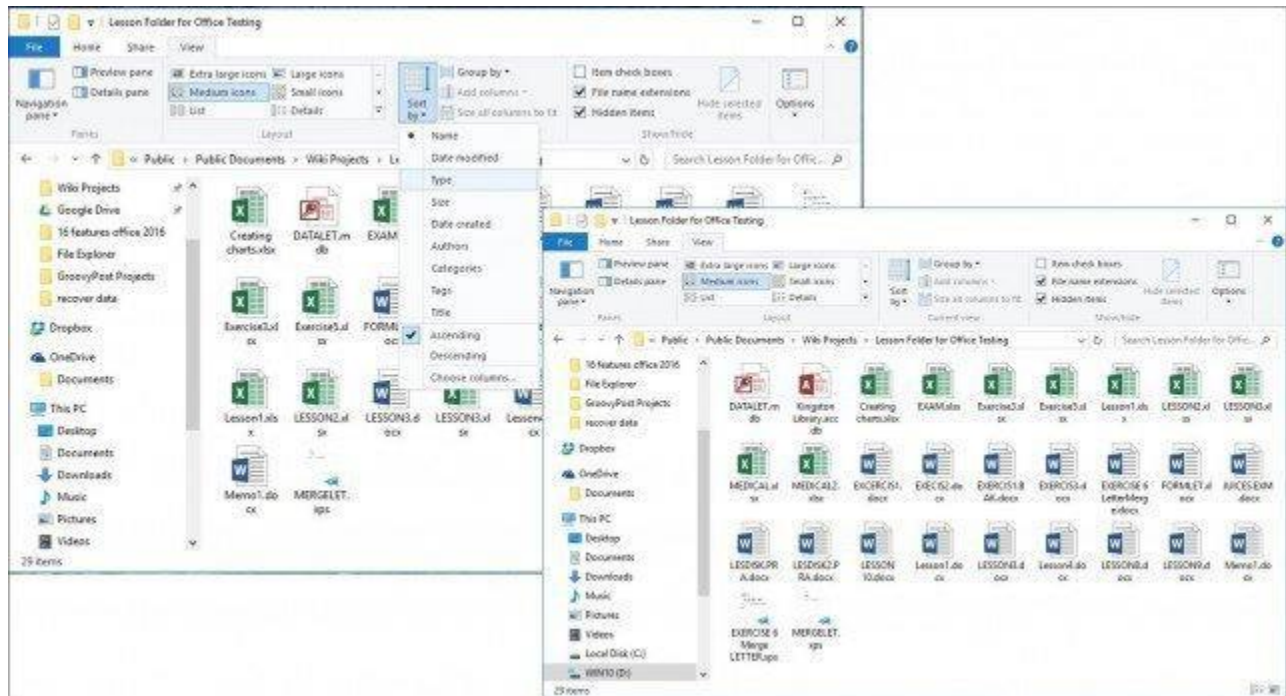
The Bread Crumb menu introduced in Windows Vista provides similar capabilities, for instance, you can easily navigate to a folder with a folder path. So, if there are sub folders within a folder, you can quickly jump to any folder within that path.

Tip: You can also use the Backspace key to also go back one step too.



Organizing Files and Folders

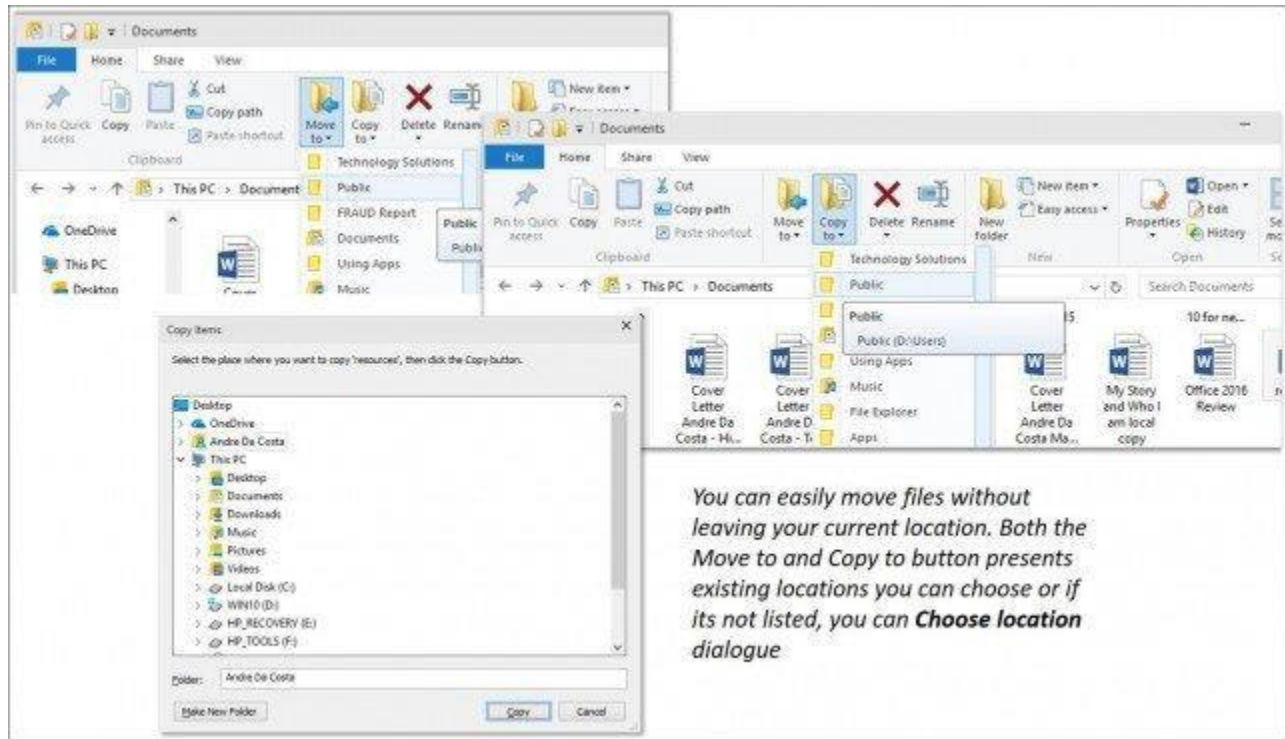
If you have a lot of files on your Windows 10 system computer, you'll want to organize them. So if you need to see recent files created or older files or you need to archive certain files elsewhere, you can easily do so. The View tab provides options for sorting how files are displayed. Here, I have chosen to sort my files by type. When I select this view, I can see all my Microsoft Word documents and Excel workbooks.



Copy, Pasting a File or Folder

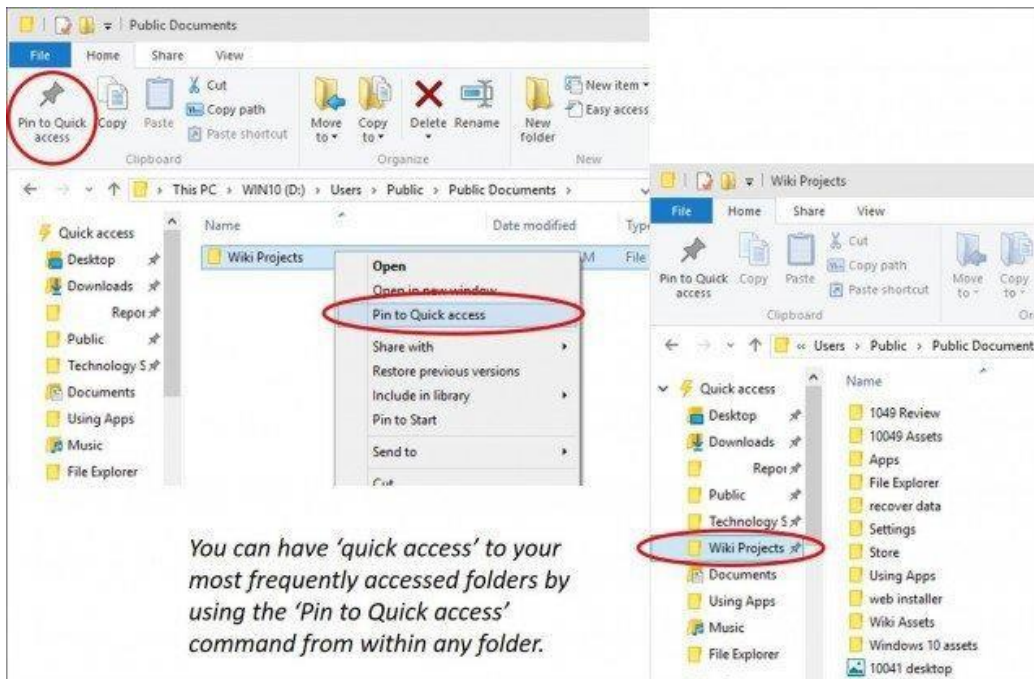
One of the most common operations for users is copying which creates a replica of an original file. To copy a file, select the file you want to copy and click Copy under the Home tab.

You can just as easily copy or move a file without leaving your current location. Under the Home tab within the *Organize* group, click Copy to or Move to button and choose the location if its listed or click the *Choose Location* button and select the location.



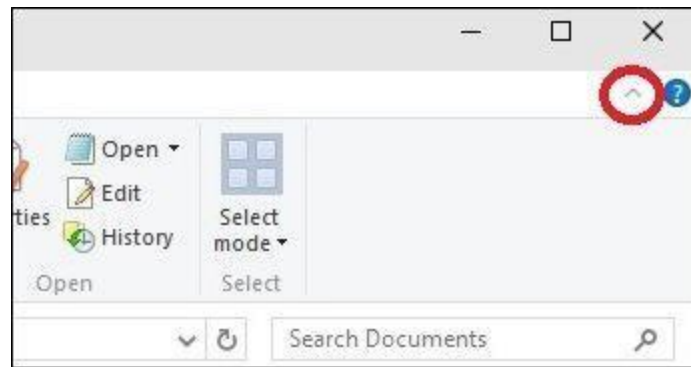
Customizing Windows 10 File Explorer

If there are folders you commonly access, you can have them pinned to the Quick Access pane. Rightclick the folder you want pinned and select *Pin to Quick Access* or select the folder and then *Pin to Quick access* under the Home tab.



If you don't want to always see the Ribbon in Windows 10, you can minimize it by clicking the

Minimize button or press *Control + F1* on your keyboard.



As you can see, File Explorer in Windows 10 contains a wealth of tools you can use to manage your files. The ribbon which will be new to many offers many organization tools that quickly accessible and makes it easier to discover and find your information.