

How to Protect Files and Folders Using Microsoft Windows

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The best way to secure sensitive information from malware is to encrypt it. Encryption works by using a complex formula to securely scramble (or encrypt) individual files and folders, entire disks and data transmissions between devices. Once encrypted, the information can only be unlocked (or decrypted) using complex digital keys that require a password. Of course, it's critical to choose a strong password.

Encrypting File System (EFS) is a feature of Windows that allows you to store information on your hard disk in an encrypted format. Encryption is the strongest protection that Windows provides to help you keep your information secure.

To encrypt a Windows 7 folder or file

1. Right-click the folder or file you want to encrypt, and then click Properties.
2. Click the General tab, and then click Advanced.
3. Select the Encrypt contents to secure data check box, and then click OK.

To encrypt a Windows XP folder or file

The EFS feature is not included in Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition.

How to Encrypt a Folder

NOTE: You can encrypt files and folders only on volumes that use the NTFS file system.

1. Click Start, point to All Programs, point to Accessories, and then click Windows Explorer.
2. Locate and right-click the folder that you want, and then click Properties.
3. On the General tab, click Advanced.
4. Under Compress or Encrypt attributes, select the Encrypt contents to secure data check box, and then click OK.
5. Click OK.
6. In the Confirm Attribute Changes dialog box that appears, use one of the following steps:
 - o If you want to encrypt only the folder, click Apply changes to this folder only, and then click OK.
 - o If you want to encrypt the existing folder contents along with the folder, click Apply changes to this folder, subfolders and files, and then click OK.

The folder becomes an encrypted folder. New files that you create in this folder are automatically encrypted. Note that this does not prevent others from viewing the contents of the folder. This prevents others from opening items in the encrypted folder.