WinZip Basic Information

Did you just receive e-mail with a Zip file attached to it, or did you just download a Zip file and don't know what to do with it? This page explains the basics of Zip files and how to use them. If you are looking for information regarding WinZip®, please click here.

- What are Zip files?
- Why do people use Zip files?
- Where does WinZip fit in?
- How do I open a Zip file?
- How do I create a Zip file?

What are Zip files?

Zip files (.zip or .zipx) are single files, sometimes called "archives", that contain one or more compressed files. Zip files make it easy to keep related files together and make transporting, e-mailing, downloading and storing data and software faster and more efficient. The Zip format is the most popular compression format used in the Windows environment, and WinZip is the most popular compression utility.

Why do people use Zip files?

Zip files compress data and therefore save time and space and make downloading software and transferring e-mail attachments faster. Typical uses for Zip files include:

- Distributing files on the Internet: Only one download is required to obtain all related files, and file transfer is quicker because the archived files are compressed.
- Sending a group of related files to an associate: When you distribute a collection of files as a single Zip file, you benefit from the file grouping as well as compression.
- Saving disk space: If you have large files that are important but seldom used, such as large data files, simply compress the files into a Zip file and then unzip (or "extract") them only when needed.

Where does WinZip fit in?

To store files in a Zip file, or to access the files in a Zip file, you need a compression utility such as WinZip. WinZip makes it easy for Windows users to work with archives. WinZip features a standard Windows point-and-click drag-and-drop interface for viewing, running, extracting, adding, deleting, and testing files in Zip files. Occasional and first-time users can choose to use the intuitive WinZip Wizard.

For more information on WinZip and how to get WinZip, please see the WinZip product information page.

How do I open a Zip file?

After you have installed WinZip, you can open a Zip file by double clicking it in your e-mail attachment or Explorer window or by starting WinZip and choosing "Unzip or install from an existing Zip file" in the WinZip Wizard. (If the WinZip Wizard does not open by default when you start WinZip, just click the Wizard button in the toolbar). The WinZip Wizard will guide you through the process of unzipping your file.

How do I create a Zip file?

To create a new Zip file, open WinZip in the WinZip Wizard mode. (If the WinZip Wizard does not open by default, just click the Wizard button in the toolbar.) You will be asked "What do you want to do?" Simply select "Create a new Zip file" and click Next. The WinZip Wizard will guide you through the entire process.

When you become more familiar with Zip file operations, you can also try the WinZip Classic interface. The Classic interface offers many advanced features that are not available in the WinZip Wizard. Using the Classic interface, you can split large Zip files into smaller parts to overcome e-mail and other size limits; view, extract, and run individual files in a Zip file; remove files from an existing Zip file; encrypt your confidential files so that they can't be used without a password; and much more. To try the Classic interface, simply click the WinZip Classic button in the WinZip Wizard. Extensive program help is available for every aspect of WinZip Classic operation.

Go to the WinZip product information page, or return to the WinZip home page.