

DOCs & JPEGs & PDFs, Oh My!: 3 Letter Extensions Decoded

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What the heck is a 3 letter extension?

You might notice that at the end of most files you download from the web or get on email, there is a period followed by three letters. Those three letters are a special code to your computer that lets the computer know what program created that file and what program your computer should use to open that file.

MOST COMMON THREE LETTER EXTENSIONS			
3 Letter Extension	What is it?	Program Used to Create File	Programs That Can Open File
.doc	A formatted text file	Microsoft Word	Microsoft Word
.wpd	A formatted text file	Word Perfect	Word Perfect
.rtf (Rich Text File)	A formatted text file	Most Any Word Processor	Most Any Word Processor
.txt	A text file	Most Any Word Processor	Most Any Word Processor
.xls	A spreadsheet file	Microsoft Excel	Microsoft Excel
.slk	A symbolic link file	Most Any Spreadsheet or Database Program	Most Any Spreadsheet or Database Program
.ppt	A PowerPoint presentation	Microsoft PowerPoint	Microsoft PowerPoint Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer
.html or .htm	A web page	Any Web Page Creation Tool	Any Web Browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Netscape)
.pdf	A special file viewable online with a small download time (portable document format)	Adobe Acrobat Apple Preview	Adobe Acrobat Reader Adobe Acrobat Apple Preview
.jpg, .gif, .tiff, .bmp, .png	A picture	Graphics Software, Digital Camera, Scanner, etc.	Any Web Browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Netscape), Most Graphics software (Microsoft Photo Editor, Graphic Converter, Photoshop, etc.)
.mp3, .mp4, .m4a, .m4p	A digital music file	Various Music Recording Software	Windows Media Player, iTunes, Other Digital Music Software
.mpeg, .avi, .mov	A digital video file	Various Video Recording Software	Windows Media Player, Apple QuickTime, Other Digital Video Software
.zip	A compressed file	WinZip Sometimes automatically compressed by AOL	WinZip Stuffit Expander
.exe	An executable file (a program that runs on your computer), <u>OFTEN a VIRUS</u>		It's a program, and it runs on any PC running Windows.

Why can't you open an email attachment?

Usually, when you can't open an attachment, it is because your computer does not have the software that created the file. Sometimes, it is because the file is a compressed file that you need to decompress before you use it.

What can you do about a file you can't open or a compressed file?

If it is a ZIP file, you can download a version of WinZip to unzip the compressed files from <http://www.winzip.com>.

If it is almost any compressed file format (ZIP, MIME, StuffIt, BinHex, etc.), you can download a version of StuffIt Expander from <http://www.stuffit.com/expander/index.html>

If it is a PDF file, you can download a free version of Adobe Acrobat Reader from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

If it is a PowerPoint file, and you just need to view it, but not edit it, you can download a free PowerPoint Viewer from <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=428d5727-43ab-4f24-90b7-a94784af71a4&displaylang=en>

If it is an Excel file, and you just need to view it or print it, but not edit it, you can download a free Excel Viewer from <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=c8378bf4-996c-4569-b547-75edbd03aaf0&DisplayLang=en> Additionally, if it is in a spreadsheet format for which you do not have the software, ask the sender to resave the file as an SLK file and resend the attachment. Almost any spreadsheet can open an SLK file.

If it is in a word processing format for which you do not have the software, ask the sender to resave the file as an RTF file and resend the attachment. Almost any word processor can open an RTF file.