How to Use a Flash Drive

Using a flash drive can make your life easier, if you utilize everything that it can offer. First time users may be confused on what exactly they need to do after opening the package and veterans flash drive users may not know the new features some USB drives have.

The First Time You Plug It In

The first time you plug in a flash drive, you need to give your computer a few moments to register the device into its drive. The drive should have a light that comes on. In the bottom right of your screen, an alert pops up indicating that it is "Installing Device Drivers". Depending on the speed of your computer, this could take anywhere from 10 seconds to 1 minute. Keep this in mind when you insert your flash drive into any new computer that has read your device.

From that point on, and anytime you plug the flash drive, a window will appear, asking you if you wish to perform a number of tasks. The window will always have "Open Folder to View Files". Some other options might be (which depends on what you have stored on your drive) "View Pictures", "Play"—if you have music—and "Play Video". One other choice, if you have Vista is "Speed Up My System" (see ReadyBoost section below).

Saving files onto the Flash Drive

If you can save to the C: drive, then you can save to your flash drive. Your computer will designate another letter to your flash drive. When you save data from within a program, all you need to do is select the correct drive letter when you "Save As..." from the program. That's it!

Planning on moving a bunch of files to the flash drive? Just double-click on *My Computer*, then double-click on your flash drive and the window will open up for you to drag-and-drop files.

How to Use a Flash Drive for ReadyBoost

Your flash drive can act as temporary RAM to help speed up your computer. This only works if you have Windows Vista. Right-click your flash drive in My Computer, then select properties. Click on the ReadyBoost tab. A recommended number is automatically calculated, which is what you should use. If you raise the number, there's a good chance you won't be able to save anything on the drive. When you close the window, your computer will use the flash drive to perform the simple functions and retains the main RAM for more powerful processing. ReadyBoost is most noticeable when you use a 4 GB or higher flash drive.

Using U3 Efficiently

U3 is special software included on most flash drives that organizes the software and data. If U3 is installed on your drive, you will get another window that pops up asking if you want to *Autoplay*. All this does is start the U3 program. A flash drive icon appears somewhere on your computer, ready to be used like many of your system tray icons. Click on it and a pseudo-Start menu appears just for the flash drive. Any software that can be run is listed as well as a few options that allow you to explore your drive, download additional programs, Update the U3 software, and more.

Portable Applications for Your Flash Drive

Some applications can be run from a flash drive, but they must be specialized to do so. While most major programs do not have a flash drive counterpart, there are some decent alternatives which do the same things.
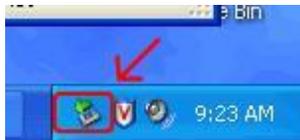
Naming Your Drive

You can name your device in two ways. The first is just by giving it a name. The more "techie" way is to write the name in the drive. To do this, double-click *My Computer*, then right-click your flash drive and select *Properties*. A window with some tabs will appear. The first tab (labeled *General*) should be in the foreground. Now see the little drive icon with a text bar that looks like you can type some text into?

That's where you enter in the name you want. Click *Apply* and every time you load up your flash drive on a computer, the name should appear instead of the manufacture model number.

Copying files to a flash drive on a PC:

1. Open **My Computer** and see which drives are shown. Most computers, for example, have a hard disk such as a C: drive and a a CD-ROM drive, and perhaps an external hard drive.

2. Insert the flash drive into the USB port and watch to see where the USB flash drive appears. Most will appear as removable storage, but some will instead appear as hard drives. Note the name Windows is using to refer to the flash drive ("Removable Disk (G:)," for example).

3. Open **My Documents** or the location from which you want to transfer files to the flash drive. Select the **files** or **folders** you want to save to the flash drive by left clicking on them. To select more than one, hold down the CTRL key while you click and select all of the files you wish to save.

4. **Right-click** on the file(s) or folder(s) you selected, then select **Send to**, then select the name you saw appearing in My Computer for the flash drive ("Removable Disk (G:)," for example).

5. When the copying is finished, **do not immediately remove the flash drive from the USB port**.

Instead, left-click on the **Remove Hardware** icon located in the System Tray. A window containing a list of the USB devices will appear. Left-click on the **Safely Remove Mass Storage Device** line that matches your flash drive (for example, **Safely Remove Mass Storage Device - Drive(G:)**).