

Over time, your Google Drive can accrue tons of files and become a mess to find anything. No matter how disorganized your Google Drive is, you can quickly put a stop to the clutter and whip everything back into a neat and organized structure. Gone are the days when you feel overwhelmed every time you open Google Drive. Here's how to organize your Drive to find everything fast and make sure it stays in order.

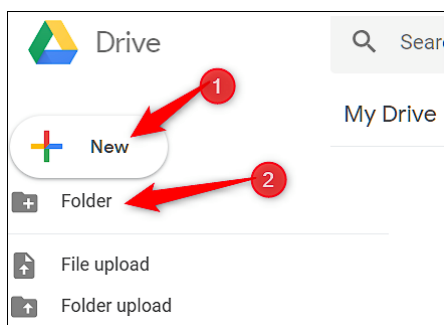
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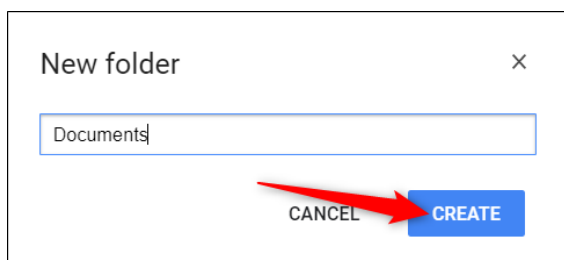
Organize Your Files into Folders

One of the easiest ways to organize your Google Drive is to create category-specific folders. For example, you could have separate folders for research projects, courses, committees or other descriptions to help you locate files. This is just like creating file folders systems on your computer. Come up with a system that makes sense for you.

From your [Drive homepage](#), click the “New” button in the top left, and then click “Folder.”

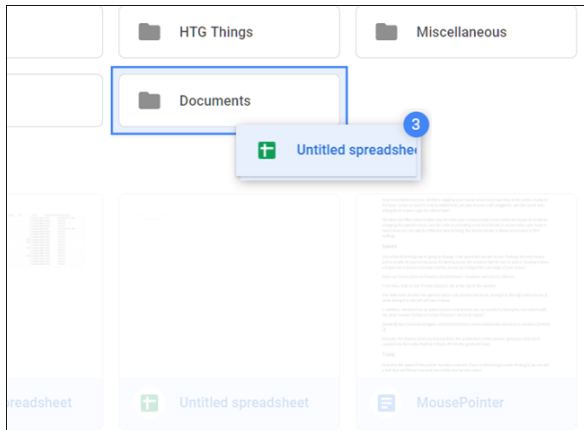


Enter a name for the folder and click “Create.”

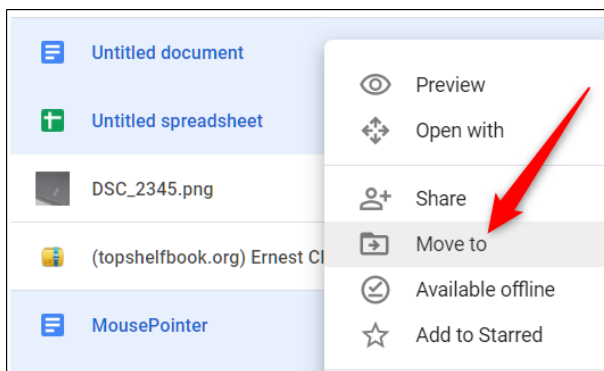


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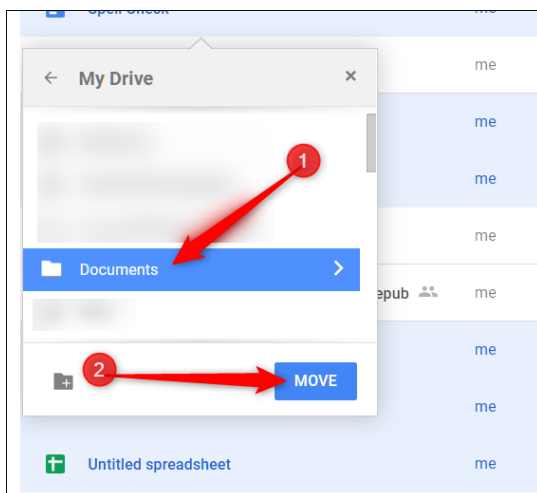
From here, drag the files you want to add directly into the new folder you created.



If you have a few files in other folders already and want to relocate them, no problem. Select the files, right-click, and then choose “Move To.”



Navigate to the destination folder, click it, and then select “Move” to transfer all the selected files to that folder.



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When you are done organizing, you will see your filing system both in the right sidebar and in the main viewing area (see below).

The screenshot shows the Google Drive interface. On the left is a sidebar with a 'New' button, a 'Priority' checkbox, and a 'My Drive' section containing a list of folders: 1-OMERAD, 802 2015, 802 PLC Groups, ARF Reviewer, Dissertation Data, GR Coordinator, Intern Videos, MATE - Co-planning, MRA 2016, Stacey and Julie Ment..., Stacey Research - loo..., TE 405 2016, TE 405 Student Work - ..., and TE 934 Collaboration. Below these is a 'Shared drives' section. The main area is titled 'My Drive' and features a 'Quick Access' section with two cards: 'Manuscript DRAFT' (edited today by Brian Mavis) and 'Session 2 Planning' (edited in the past week by Amy Guenther). Below the cards is a table listing files and folders.

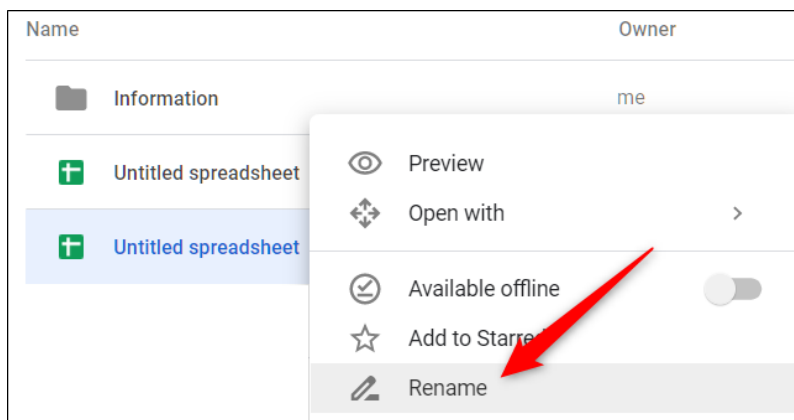
Name	Owner	Last modified
1-OMERAD	me	Aug 27, 2019 me
802 2015	Amy Ward	Sep 12, 2016 me
802 PLC Groups	me	Nov 12, 2016 me
ARF Reviewer	me	Aug 14, 2018 me
Dissertation Data	me	Jun 2, 2016 me
GR Coordinator	me	May 16, 2016 me

Helpful Tip: If it is a file you go to often and it is way down the list due to alpha order, I put a 1 - in front of it to make it move to the top for quick access. See how I did that with the 1-OMERAD file?

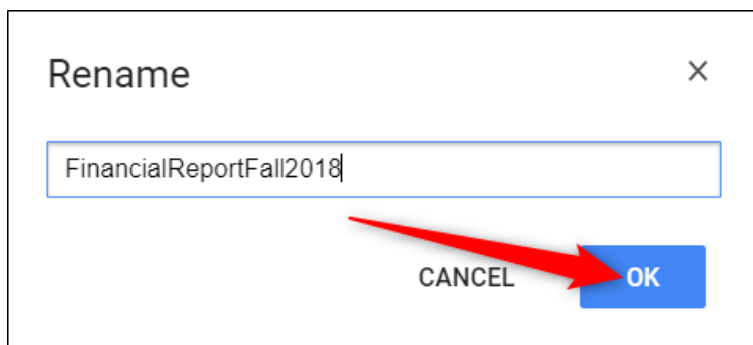
Rename Folders or Files: Use a Naming Convention

Try to use a naming convention that helps you easily differentiate files and folders from each other. When you start to accumulate more items in your Drive, thoughtful names could save you from opening several files while you try to locate a specific one. Having multiple spreadsheets with extremely ambiguous names isn't a helpful way to find anything in a pinch.

To change a file's or folder's name, right-click a file or folder and click "Rename."



Give the file or folder a short and descriptive name, and then click "OK."



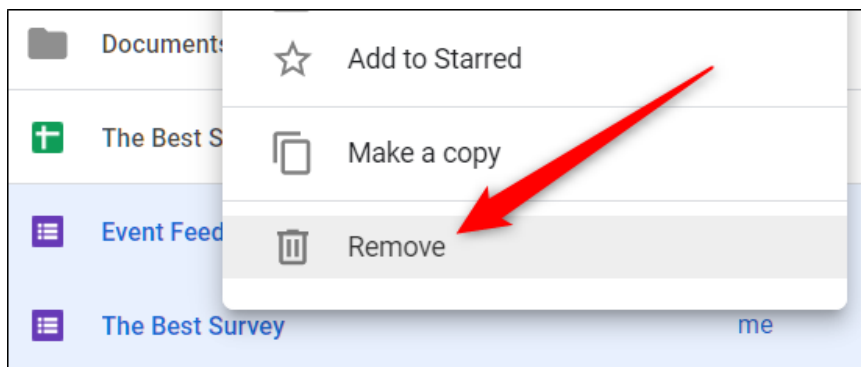
Remember to keep a consistent and descriptive naming scheme to make it obvious where to find specific items and what the actual file contains.

Delete Files You Don't Need

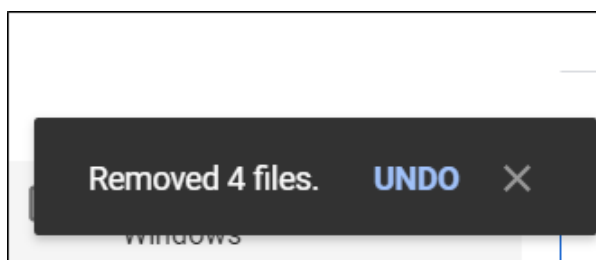
After you move your important files into more distinguishable folder categories, you might have some leftover duplicate or unnecessary documents in your Drive. This is when you can delete those potentially unneeded files still hogging up space.

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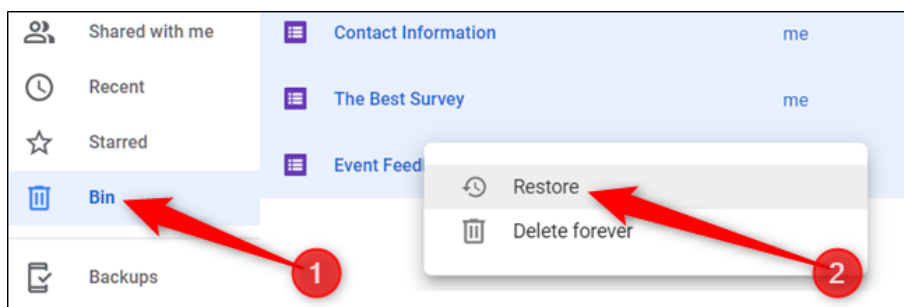
All you have to do is highlight the file, right-click it, and then select “Remove.”



Drive doesn't provide you with a confirmation prompt when you delete files but does give you the chance to undo a delete. Click “Undo” to reverse the deletion.



If you miss the opportunity to click “Undo” after you remove some files, click the “Bin” button located in the menu bar, right-click on the files you want to bring back, and then click “Restore.”



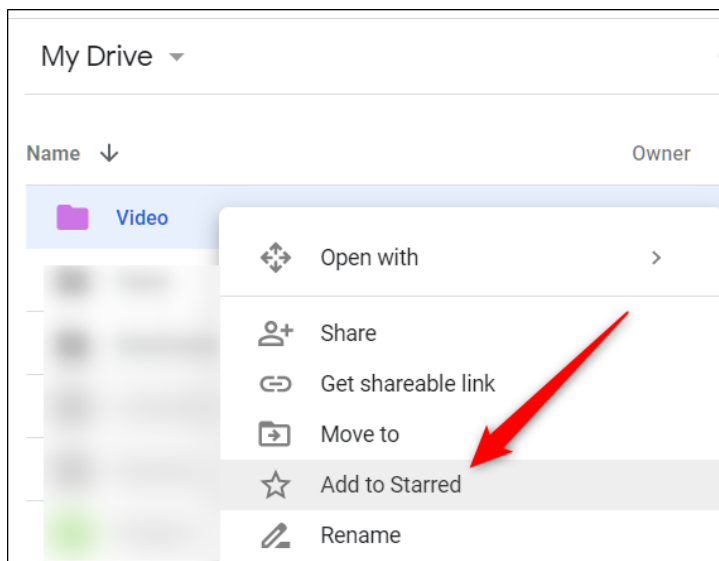
The previously deleted files will now return to your Drive from where they came.

Star Important Files and Folders

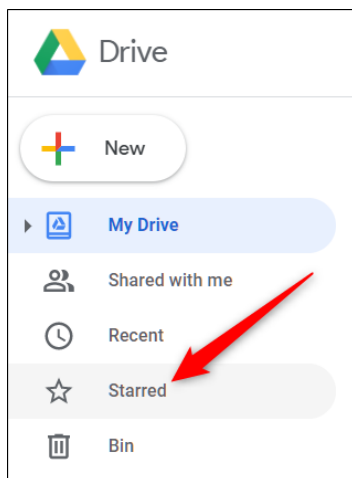
Starring essential files and folders in Google Drive works the same as [starred emails in Gmail](#). When you star something, Drive adds it to a special “Starred” section that you can access directly from the menu pane on the left side.

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Right-click on a file or folder and then select “Add to Starred.”



You can view the starred items by clicking on “Starred” in the pane on the left side of the screen.



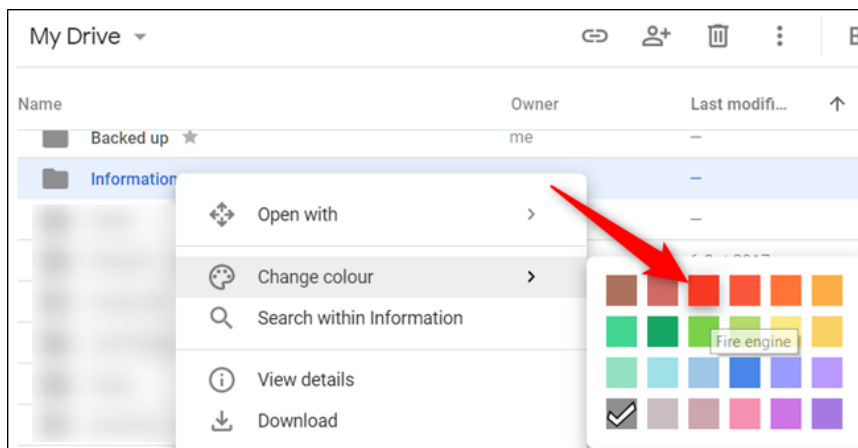
The item stays in its current place and Drive essentially creates a symbolic link—much like we did in the previous section—to the original that shows up in “Starred.”



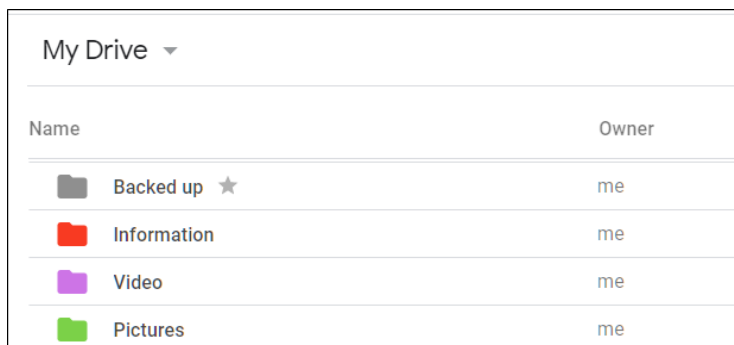
Color-Code Your Folders

By default, Google Drive uses grey for all folders. While folder color isn't a make or break detail, you can color-code them to recognize a folder easier and make it stand out from all the rest. You have the choice of 24 colors to put a little pizzazz into your Drive.

Right-click on a folder, hover over "Change Color," and then choose from one of the colors provided.

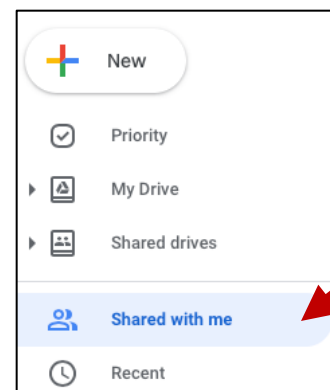


The folder changes to the color you chose. This option is available for every folder in your Drive.



Organizing “Shared with Me” Files/Folders

Google Drive users love the ability to share files and folders with collaborators, however, keeping Google Drive organized can be difficult. This is particularly true for files or folders that are shared with you. The “Shared with Me” section of Google Drive lists items in date order which leads to frustration when people go looking for shared files. To add to the difficulty, files and folders located in “Shared with Me” cannot be retrieved using Drive’s powerful search tool. **Many regular Drive users remain unaware that “Shared with Me” files can be added to and organized in your Google Drive using the “Add to Drive” option.**

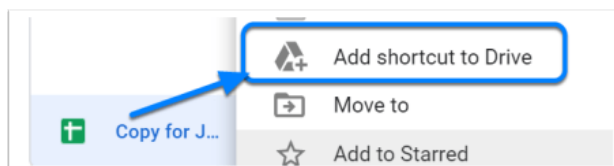


Adding Shared Files to Google Drive

Using the “Add to Drive” option, you can “move” files or folders from “Shared with me” to any location within your Google Drive, making items easier to find when you need them.


1. Locate the file in Shared with Me
2. Right click (Command Click for Macs) on the file or folder
3. From the menu, choose “+ Add Shortcut to Drive”
4. File or folder will move to “My Drive” or you can choose “Organize” to choose a specific location

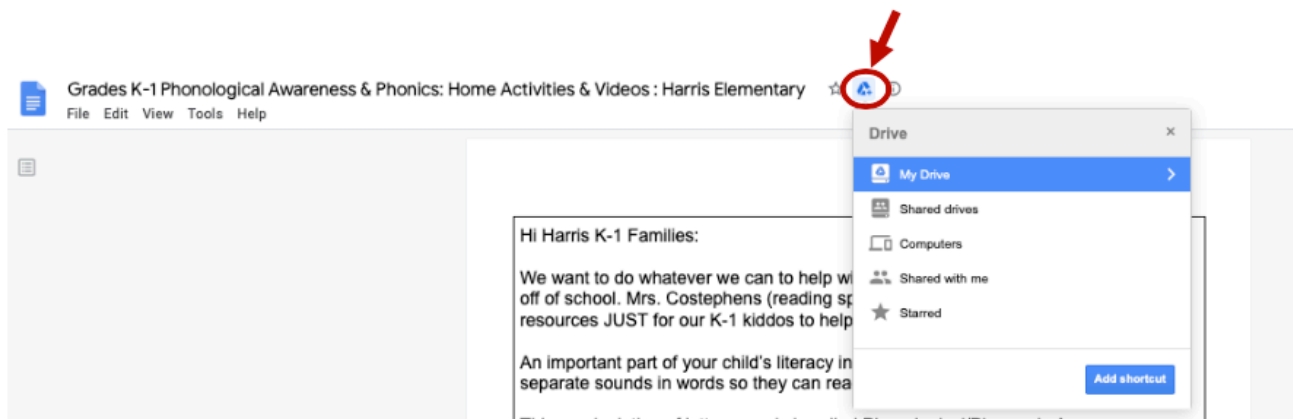
NOTE: File or folder you Add to Drive will remain listed in Shared with Me. This is because Shared with Me is a label indicating a file originated from someone else.



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Alternatively, when viewing a shared file that you found by clicking a link in an email. You can click on the  icon next to the file name at the top left of the screen after the file name. You will then be given the option of where (what folder) you would like to save it to within your Drive. Then click “Add shortcut”.



Not a Copy

Using the “Add Shortcut to Drive” option for shared or View only files (or folders), allows you to place the file (or folder) into your Drive in a location that makes sense for you. Some important things to understand about “Add to Drive” feature:

- It does **not** create **a copy** of the file/folder
- It is a link back to the actual file (or folder), so that it is **always the most up to date version**
- It **does not move** the file/folder **for collaborators**, so no need to worry that you will cause a problem for others sharing the file
- If you have “Edit” permissions on the file/folder that you “Add to Drive” then **any changes you make**, such as edits to a file, adding new items into a shared folder, **will be reflected for all collaborators** of that file/folder.

Adding Individual Files from a Shared Folder

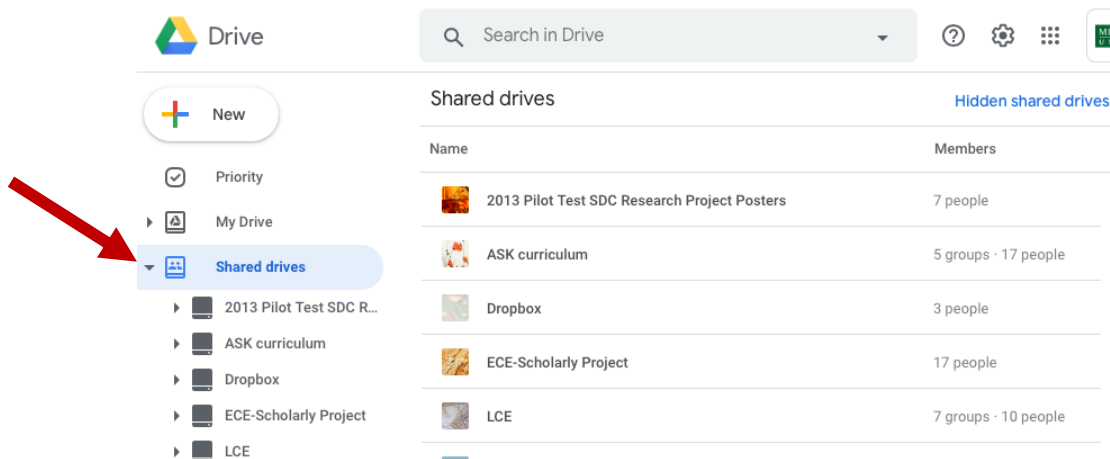
When folders are shared with you, these can also be added to your Drive. If your goal is to move only certain files within a shared folder into your Drive, you will need to do so [using the “Shift” + “z” command to “Add to” another folder](#), so that you do not inadvertently remove files for other collaborators.

Video Tutorial – Organizing Shared with Me Files in Google Drive

To learn more about how to organize shared files, take a look at the [Organizing Shared with Me tutorial video](#).

Shared Drives

As MSU Faculty we also have a feature called Shared Drives found in the right sidebar below your Google Drive. These drives work just like Google Drive in that they are live documents on which to collaborate. These are often created for shared projects.



Video Tutorials to Help your Organizing Efforts

- 5 Tips to help you Organize Your Drive (8 minutes – don't worry about Tip 4)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dpl0tsbH4hl>
- Google Drive Tips & Tricks to Save you Time (12 minutes – Tip 5 is for Gmail and less helpful for MSU email users)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rry1205mW0>
- Organizing Shared with Me Files (3+ minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PL5ybNyowvZQePkOI8OCExLk6lA9pWJZid&v=lqDS2rq152l>