

File Deletion, File Recovery, and SRL Backups

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Q: Oops, I've accidentally deleted my file from my computer to the recycle bin can I get it back?

A: Well the simple answer is, it depends. If you deleted your files from your hard drive, (your desktop or folders on the 'C:' or 'D:' drives) then you're in luck. It's probably not entirely erased yet. Even if you've restarted the computer, you will likely be able to retrieve it. Go back to the original computer in which you saved the file, as the Windows *Recycle Bin* not consistent about preserving files across the computers onto which you log on.

Once at the computer where you saved the file, simply double click on the Recycle Bin. When you see the file that you want, you can then drag it to its preferred location using the mouse. If you want all the files in the Recycle Bin to return to their prior locations, simply click *Restore All*. The file(s) will now be back in their original location(s).

However, if you've deleted the file from a removable storage system (e.g., floppy disk, zip disk, USB key) or compressed folders (such as a .zip file) then it is actually *gone**. These files bypass the Recycle Bin.

If you've deleted a file from a network drive (the most common are L, S, and X) the file will also **not** appear in the Recycle Bin. However the Sociology Research Lab does keep backup tapes for this very purpose. If you need to retrieve a file from a backup tape, all files on network drives get backed up nightly. More specifically, this happens:

1. All files modified on a given day are backed up that night.
2. A portion of all files on network drives, regardless of whether they were modified, is backed up. It takes one week of backups to completely represent all the files on the network.
3. We run backups on a 4-week cycle. So, **on week 5th week tapes from week 1 are overwritten.**

To be safe, you essentially have **a little over 3 weeks** from the time of deletion to contact us about a deleted file that you may need from a network drive.

4. Local drives (C, D, zip disks, floppies) are not backed up.

Delete with caution!

Network Drive Scenarios:

- If you create a file today and accidentally delete it before the time at night when it gets backed up to tape, it cannot be retrieved.

- If you created a file yesterday or beforehand and make some changes today, then delete the file, you lose today's changes but we can restore the file in its state as of yesterday.

- If you deleted a file and don't ask us to have it restored within 28 days, we probably can't

restore it (because it will have been overwritten with more recent backups).

- If you created a file ten years ago, haven't modified it since, then deleted it today, we can get the most recent version from between 1-7 days ago. That's because all files on network drives get backed up, even those that haven't been modified in a long time.

Q: What if I've emptied my *Recycle Bin*?

A: Despite common perception, deleting the Recycle Bin does not erase all of its contents from the hard drive. It does, however, make the pointer file (the bit of information that points to the location of the file) invisible to the operating system.

*To recover a file in this situation, there are several utilities that you can find on the Internet (e.g. <http://osusls.osu.edu>, <http://www.download.com/>). These utilities look for data that do not have pointer information and then give you a list of these documents. But beware, because of the way disks work, the longer you wait to attempt to retrieve these files the more likely they will be overwritten. The SRL can help with the installation and use of this software on Lab-owned and -maintained computers.