

BUILD AN INDEX TO ACCOMPLISH A FAST FILE SEARCH

The Windows Search feature provides fast file searches by building an index. This index is used by either search box, the one at Start or the one in File Explorer.

The Windows Search indexer is controlled from the Indexing Options dialog, which is buried within the Control Panel. It's particularly hard to find on Windows 10.

Even more confusingly, this tool is not normally shown in the Control Panel's default category view. *To open it, you have to open the Control Panel, click the "View by" menu, and select either "Large icons" or "Small icons". You'll then see an "Indexing Options" shortcut in the list.*

As an alternative, you can open the Start menu, search for "Indexing Options", and press "Enter" or click the "Indexing Options" shortcut to launch it.

Control Which Folders Windows Search Indexes

The Indexing Options dialog shows you the folders Windows is currently indexing. It also shows you how many files Windows found inside these folders. In addition, Windows will monitor these folders for new files and automatically add them to the index.

In Windows 10, the operating system indexes two particularly important locations by default: the **Start Menu** folder, so it can find and return application shortcuts; and the **Users** folders.

The Users folder is where your personal files are stored. For example, the default Downloads, Desktop, Documents, Pictures, Music, Videos, and Contacts folders are all under C:\Users*YourName*\. This means that Windows should be indexing these important files by default.

To add folders—or remove some of the folders that are here by default—click the "Modify" button. To make Windows start indexing a folder, check it in the list. To make Windows stop indexing a folder, uncheck it.

This is also where you can add "exclusions." For example, Windows normally indexes the Users folder and all its subfolders. But, if you wanted Windows to stop indexing your Desktop folder so search results from the Desktop folder wouldn't appear when you searched, you'd locate the Desktop folder and uncheck it. It would then appear as an exclusion under the "Exclude" column.

Click "OK" when you're done and Windows will immediately and automatically begin indexing the chosen folders. You may see an "Indexing speed is reduced due to user activity" message here. You can ignore it—Windows will just attempt to build the index when you aren't actively using your computer so it won't slow

your computer down. This will happen in the background even after you close this window.

Choose Which File Types Windows Search Indexes

To choose which file types Windows Search indexes, click the “Advanced” button and then click the “File Types” tab.

From here, you can choose to exclude certain file types from indexing by unchecking them in the list. You can also choose whether Windows just indexes the name and other file properties, or whether it digs into the file and indexes the text inside it. For example, let’s say you have a file named “Three Ways to Speed Up Windows 10.doc” that contains the word “malwarebytes”. When you perform a search for “malwarebytes” in Windows, Windows will find the Three Ways to Speed Up Windows 10 file if it’s indexing the file contents of .doc files.

You can also add new files types here and tell Windows you want to index them, if you use another type of file extension that Windows doesn’t normally index.

Most people probably won’t need to change these settings. But if you just want to have Windows indexing a certain type of file extension by name or not at all, this is where you control it.

Control Advanced Options

Other advanced options can be accessed by clicking the “Advanced” button and using the options on the “Index Settings” tab. For example, you can choose whether you want Windows to index encrypted files. By default, it doesn’t.

You can also choose to delete and rebuild the index from scratch from here by clicking the “Rebuild” button. This will take some time, but could fix problems if Windows search doesn’t seem to be working properly.

Once you’re done using Windows Search, you can search using either the options in the Start menu, tools in Cortana, or the search box in File Explorer.

You can clearly see the index in action when you search specific folders. For example, search for something in the C:\ drive and the process will be slow. Windows has to search the entire drive at that moment, as it doesn’t have an index.

If you select your “Users” folder and perform a search, the search will be almost instantaneous. Windows is quickly searching the index rather than crawling through every file in your Users folder at that moment.