

Where your data is stored – A guide to drive letters

If you open your “My Computer” icon you will see a list of drive letters followed by brief descriptions. This guide tells you what these drives are used for and where you should store your data.

The contents of your “My Computer” list will differ depending on what school you belong to and what applications you have access to. There are two main drives where your personal data is stored. These are G and E.

Your G drive.

Your G drive is a direct link to your network space on the University’s servers. Also known as your “Home area” this is the area on the network where your profile, email and some program files are stored. Your G drive is a network drive which means you can access it from any University PC. Space is limited on the servers so space is limited in your home area. Allowing email and files to build up in your home area can result in loss of data and profile corruption. So use it sparingly.

As various system files are stored on your G drive it is essential that you do not delete or move any files that you do not recognise. If you are at all unsure of a files purpose do not delete it.

Pros of using the G drive:

- Available from any University PC

Cons of using the G drive:

- Space is extremely limited
- Allowing the drive to become full could lead to loss of files and emails

Your E drive.

Your E drive (User-files) is a local drive. This means that the drive is physically located on your PC. This drive has the most storage space available to you by far. We would recommend any large files and documents are stored here. This drive should also be used to store any data you do not need to access from another PC. Image, sound and video files tend to be large so be especially careful with these and if possible always store them on your E drive.

Pros of using the E drive:

- Large amount of storage space
- Does not reduce your available network space

Cons of using the E drive:

- Anyone who is logged on to your PC can access the data
- Can not be accessed from another PC

Shared areas

Most schools have their own shared areas. The drive letter they are mapped to will differ. However, they will range from H to L and N to P. Shared areas are network drives. Which means you can access them from any University PC. Space on shared areas is limited but not as limited as the space on your G drive. As the name suggests - shared areas are accessible by groups of staff so are a handy place to keep documents that everyone needs access to. Usually, you will automatically be given access to your school shared area when your account is created. Care must be taken when editing or deleting files on shared areas. Ensure that nobody else will need to use a file before you delete it. Do not store your private files on a shared area unless you want your colleagues to be able to open them.

Pros of using shared areas:

- Available from any University PC
- Can share files with colleagues
- Colleagues can share files with you

Cons of using shared areas:

- Space is limited
- Anyone in the group can view, edit and delete your files
- Not private

Removable drives

Removable drives are small storage devices that can be carried with you and plugged into the USB port of any PC. You can purchase a variety of these devices and their storage capacity varies. These devices are useful if you want to keep large amounts of data, be able to access it from any PC, keep it private and not take up unnecessary space in your home area. When you plug the device into your PC it will automatically be assigned a free drive letter and will be available through your “My Computer” icon like any other drive. You must be careful not to lose these devices as the data on them can be accessed by anyone who has the device in their possession. However, some devices come with the facility to password protect the contents.

Pros of using removable drives:

- Small and portable
- Can be used with any PC
- Contents available only to the bearer
- Some can be password protected
- Does not reduce your available network space

Cons of using removable drives:

- Care must be taken not to lose the device
- Data can be accessed by anyone unless password protected

- Cheaper devices can have limited storage capacity

Other drives

Drives such as Q, Y and Z are system drives and you should not attempt to store any data on them. These drives are used to enable software and services to be delivered to your PC.

Additionally, you may have some drives that are dedicated for the use of certain applications. There are two golden rules when you encounter a drive that you are unfamiliar with:

- If you don't know what it is – leave it alone
- If in doubt ask the Help Desk

For further help and advice call the Help Desk on x 7555. Or email them on helpdesk@gre.ac.uk.