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How to recover deleted files from android phone after factory reset

Photo: David MurphyThe computer ate my term paper! We've all been there. You delete an important file—maybe even shift-delete it by accident (on Windows)—or you forget about it until that split-second after you clear out your Recycle Bin or Trash. It's gone forever, right?Not quite.Before you summon the most epic of freakouts, there's a very good chance that your file is still alive and kicking somewhere on your hard drive—you just need to know how to find it. With the right tools, recovering that deleted file can be as simple as a few clicks of your mouse.Part 1: The OverviewScreenshot: David Murphy ((Backblaze)Before you go into full-on file recovery mode, take a second to double-check the folder you saved the file in, as well as the Recycle Bin or Trash. Also, think about your setup: Do you have any backups stored elsewhere? Is an application such as OneDrive, iCloud, Backblaze or Google Backup and Sync automatically saving everything you do to the cloud? If so, you might be able to restore a recent (or slightly older) version of your file from there, instead of going through more complicated steps.Otherwise, you'll need to turn to a file-recovery application to help out.1. Stop What You're DoingWhen your operating system deletes a file, all it really does is mark the space on your hard drive that your file occupies as free space. It's still there, but your computer is now perfectly happy to write new data on top of it—at which point the file recovery process becomes a lot more difficult. That means you should do as little computing as possible until you find the file you're looking for, since your chances of recovering the file go down every time your computer writes information to drive.2. Find the right file-recovery programScreenshot: RecuvaWindows: You have a lot of great open-source and freeware options for file recovery if you're running Windows. We're big fans of Recuva, which has both free and pro versions, but you should also consider EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard (2GB limit for the free version), and PhotoRec. Between these three apps, odds are good you'll be able to save whatever it was you deleted—and, yes, you'll want to try different apps if one doesn't find what you deleted. Don't give up!Mac: You can also get a free version of EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard for the Mac—same 2GB limit as before, unless you pay up. Beyond that, PhotoRec is also available for Mac, as is the open-source tool TestDisk. You can also try out Disk Drill, though I believe it needs to be running before you delete your file (for the free version, at least).3. Recover Your FilesOnce you've picked a tool, it's time to scan your hard drive for your lost file or files. This process varies depending on the app you're using, but it's pretty similar for all of them: Just point the program at the hard drive or folder that was holding your missing file and start your scan. Once the scan is complete, you're going to see a big list of jumbled file names. Often most of these files are nothing more than system files that your operating system has created in the course of basic operation, and you won't need to worry about them. You're just looking for the file type and name that matches what you've lost.Once you find what you're looking for, select it and pick the option to restore it, however you do that in each individual app. As mentioned, if you didn't find anything with one application, try another—and another. Don't give up until you've exhausted a few, because you might be able to extract success from (early) failure if you're persistent.Part 2: More Specific ProblemsAbove, you got a basic overview for recovering deleted files from your computer. Now we'll take a closer look at some more specific problems, methods of data recovery, and tools that may be of help in your quest for your elusive lost data.Recover files from a wiped or unbootable hard drive So you didn't just accidentally delete a file or two and empty your Recycle Bin prematurely—instead you're dealing with a whole hard drive worth of missing data. First, you'll want to stop using the drive, as we mentioned earlier. If your system's primary drive went kaput, stop trying to boot up your PC. Remove the drive from your laptop or desktop (if you can), slap it in an external enclosure, and use another computer to try and restore its precious contents. Many of the apps we previously mentioned should work just fine for your damaged or deleted drive.Screenshot: GParted (Live CD)If you can't remove the drive, or don't have any other computers you can use (or borrow) to help out, you can try using something like the Active@ LiveCD, any other Live CD that comes with the TestDisk recovery tool. You'll boot onto one of those instead of your primary hard drive, and you'll hopefully be able to recover your files that way.(That all said, this is a perfect example of why it's critical for you to back up your important files elsewhere—ideally the cloud, so all you'll lose in a hard drive failure is the time it takes you to buy a new one, reinstall windows, reinstall your apps, and re-download your critical stuff.)Recover Lost PhotosScreenshot: PhotoRecIf you need to resurrect photos from a damaged flash memory card from your digital camera, you'll be happy to know that most of the applications listed in part one above will do the trick—you just need plug in your camera or insert the card into your computer's card reader before running your data recovery application of choice. (I would try PhotoRec first, then the other apps as needed.)Assuming you didn't lose the files due to some weird mechanical issue, your best bet to stay safe going forward is to make sure you're importing photos as soon as you plug in your camera (or card reader). You can set this up in Windows or macOS directly, and there are plenty of other apps—like Dropbox or Google Backup and Sync—that will be more than happy to send your files to the (safer) cloud the moment you plug in your device.Recover Lost Word DocumentsIf your lost dissertation was saved as a Word document, you've got a few more interesting options for getting to your lost or deleted documents. Acronis has a great tutorial about the major ways Word allows you to recover that which you accidentally delete (or lose), as does Microsoft itself—absolutely worth reading before you start to panic. And, as James Konik notes over at Cloudwards: "You can try hunting for files with the ".asd" extension, too. They are the temporary files Word uses to store your work as you go, but before you save. If you can locate them, Word should be able to open and restore at least some of your lost data."Recover data from scratched CDs!People still use CDs/DVDs? In case you're in the minority—you still have access to an optical drive (built-in or external) on your computer—you have a few options for recovering data on scratched, old, or otherwise problematic CDs and DVDs. First off, though, resist the urge to wipe them with a banana. Yes, people do that.If you're trying to rip data from an audio CD, give the freeware app Exact Audio Copy a try. If it doesn't give you results on your optical drive, try out the same CD and app on a different optical drive—likely a friend's, since I doubt you have multiple drives sitting around. Otherwise, you can try the Live CD route once again, and boot into something like SystemRescueCD (on a flash drive) and use its built-in ddrescue tool to extract whatever you can from your scratched media.Though it's nearly a decade old at this point, an number of people also swear by Roadkil's Unstoppable Copier as a great app for dumping your scratched disc's contents. If that doesn't work, and you're out of options, you could always try polishing your disc as best as you can to see if that fixes the issue. A number of people have come up with different techniques for resuscitating your scratched disc:Part 3: Don't Let This Happen AgainWhatever the cause of your lost file, the best method of data recovery is a good preemptive data backup plan. If you're on Windows, you have plenty of options for creating multiple copies of your critical data, ensuring that an accidental deletion is more a nuisance than a catastrophe going forward:We are scratching our collective heads as to how the Windows 10 October Update ever made it past...Read more!If you're not backing up your computer, you should be. You never know when your hard drive will...Read moreOur Windows App of the Week isn't something you'll probably have to use very often—we hope—but it's Read more!On macOS, Time Machine is your friend—as are iCloud backups. You can also use the same third-party services Windows users can partake in!If you don't have an offsite cloud storage plan (and you really should), Google's newest update to...Read moreWhether you're backing up your Mac with Time Machine or another service, it can be an incredibly...Read moreThe subject of file backups and online storage came up the other day at a Lifehacker staff meeting. Read moreWe're turning the lens around for this week's Tech 911. Lifehacker Managing Editor Virginia Smith...Read moreWhatever you decide on, make sure you pick something so your data is safely replicated elsewhere. I always recommend a three-pronged approach: Keep a physical backup you can readily access, like a separate drive or external storage device, even if you update its contents sparingly (once a month, let's say). Use some kind of cloud backup tool or service—plenty of free and cheap options are available—to also store your more critical files, even if you don't update them regularly. Finally, pay for some kind of always-on backup service that syncs your work to the cloud, so even a quick oopsie (or shift-delete) will only cost you a few minutes to restore the file, not the hours you otherwise spent updating your document or presentation. This story was originally published on 6/10/08 and was updated on 7/29/19 to provide more thorough and current information. The extensibility of Android means we have a wide variety of options when it comes to choosing a phone. From the Pixels to the Samsung Experience UI on the Galaxy Note 8, the uncluttered software experience with OnePlus 5T or the heavily skinned MIUI 9 on the Mi Mix 2, you can get a phone tailored to your preferences. With such a diverse set of user experiences available, it's not uncommon to see gremlins pop up along the way. More often than not, you can find fixes for problems commonly affecting your phone, but if you're unable to find a solution, then it doesn't hurt to try a hard reset. A factory reset also comes in handy if you're looking to sell your device. But before you do, you should make sure the data on your device is backed up so you don't lose precious photos or documents. There are apps that let you take entire backups of your phone, including the app data, but most of them require your device to be rooted. Seeing as how there's not that much incentive to root anymore coupled with the fact that services like Samsung Pay and Netflix don't run on rooted devices, I'm going to list options that don't require you to root your phone. With that out of the way, let's get started. Use Google Photos to back up your photos: There are plenty of options available if you're looking to store your photos in the cloud, but Google Photos is the best of the lot. Photos is pre-installed on most Android phones, and lets you easily back up your photos and videos to the cloud. It also has its own Assistant, which automatically creates collages, short highlight clips, and much more. You get unlimited storage space for your photos as long as you choose the "high quality" setting, which compresses photos to save space. Google's compression algorithm is astonishingly good at preserving the detail in the photos while drastically reducing the file size. You're not going to notice any difference in image quality when compared to the full-size photo, even at 100% zoom. The high quality setting should be more than adequate to most, and you can't beat unlimited storage space. Google Photos' high quality setting saves the files in their original resolution up to 16MP. Any photos that are larger will be resized to 16MP. Same goes for videos as well — any 4K video will be resized to "high-definition 1080p", and Full HD footage or lower will look near-identical while taking up a fraction of the space. Of course, if you're shooting 4K video or have a phone with a 19MP shooter (like the Sony Xperia XZ1) and are looking to preserve videos and photos in their native resolution, you can choose the "original quality" setting in Photos. Photos and videos saved under this setting will get counted toward your Drive storage quota. You usually get 15GB of free storage, and you'll have to purchase additional storage, with the 100GB plan available for just \$1.99 a month. If you have a Pixel, you get unlimited photo and video backups. First-gen Pixel owners get unlimited photo backups for life, and those using the Pixel 2 will be able to upload at original quality until 2020. Photos is one of the best Google services around, and if you haven't done so already, you should set it up today. Google Photos: Everything you need to know Get your music in the cloud If you haven't already switched to a streaming service like Spotify or Play Music, now's the time to do so. You'll be able to access a catalog of over 35 million songs for \$9.99 a month, and you can download the tracks for listening even when you're offline. Both services also come with a family plan that can be split among six people for \$14.99 a month. If you have a sizeable music collection, Play Music lets you upload 50,000 songs to the cloud (100,000 if you're using a Samsung phone), allowing you to stream tunes from your own library on the go. You'll need to use a computer to upload the songs to Play Music (you can use Google's Music Manager software), but once they're on the service, you will be able to stream them on your device without having to worry about taking up storage. How to upload and download music on Google Play Music The one downside with Play Music is that it doesn't support FLAC files, so you won't be able to upload your lossless media to the cloud. If you have a vast library of hi-res audio content, then your best bet is to create your own media server. I moved my media library to my Synology NAS (network attached storage) several years ago, and I use the company's DS audio app to stream songs on my phone. The best part about a Synology NAS is its robust operating system (DiskStation Manager) and its slew of apps for everything from photo storage to note-taking, video streaming, and more. You can pick up a two-bay Synology NAS for as low as \$169, load it up with a 6TB WD Red hard drive, and you're good to go. I set up my first Synology media server over three years ago, and it's working flawlessly. Of course, you're looking at a minimum of \$300 to get started with your media server, so you'll have to factor that into the equation. If you are particular about listening to lossless media but aren't too keen on setting up a NAS, you can always subscribe to Tidal. The hi-res streaming service costs \$19.99 a month, and while the catalog isn't as extensive as that of Spotify or Play Music, you do get 16-bit audio. Spotify or Google Play Music should be more than sufficient for most people, and there's Tidal for those looking to stream hi-res audio on the go. If you want fine-grained control over your media, you can always set up your own cloud server. Use Google Drive for documents and everything else Cloud storage services are a dime a dozen, and Drive is one of the best options around. It comes pre-installed on all Android phones, has tons of sharing options, and comes with a minimalist interface that's easy to understand. Drive is particularly handy for documents as it has a built-in PDF viewer. You get 15GB of storage space for free, and if you need more, you can get 100GB of storage for \$1.99 a month. The same storage is used for Photos as well as Drive, so if you're looking to store full-resolution photos and videos, you should take that into consideration as well. Google Drive: Everything you need to know Switch to a better text messaging client I switch phones once every two weeks on average, and while my photo and music needs are catered to by Google Photos and Synology, I haven't found a suitable text messaging app. I use Android Messages for its simplicity, but it's sorely lacking in features and doesn't back up your texts to the cloud. Thankfully, I discovered Microsoft's SMS Organizer earlier this week, and it has everything I'm looking for in a messaging app. There's an option to back up texts to Google Drive (you can choose the frequency), it automatically sorts texts into various categories — personal, promotional, and transactional — and it parses the texts to surface bill reminders at the top. Oh, and there's even a dark theme. There are other SMS apps out there that perform a similar function, so if you're wary of Redmond seeing your data, hit up the guide below: How to back up and restore text messages on Android Back up your launcher If you're using a launcher, you should consider backing up its data so you can pick up from where you left off when switching to a new device. Most launchers come with an option to back up and restore settings, so if you've set up your launcher just so and don't want to go through the entire process again when moving to a new phone, you should consider backing up the data. How to back up your Android launcher Your phone has a default backup option that saves apps that are currently installed and device settings. You'll be able to back up much more information if you're using a Pixel or a Samsung phone — including call logs, contacts, calendar, backgrounds, and home screen settings. You can toggle the option by diving into Settings -> System -> Backup. Your turn With a bevy of options available for backing up everything from photos to documents, texts, music, and more, it's incredibly convenient to get all your data in the cloud. What services do you rely on for backing up your data? Let us know in the comments below. We may earn a commission for purchases using our links. Learn more.

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