



Recovering Data from Corrupt Disks

"Opening files on a floppy disk that is no longer working"

Please Note:

If you have to resort to this handout,
it is highly likely the data is gone forever.
Make sure the patron understands this, and that
the library is not liable for further damage
to the data or the disk.

The First Thing To Try:

Reading the disk in DOS:

1. Launch the DOS window by going to Start > Programs > Accessories > Command Prompt
2. There will be a cursor blinking at the c-prompt (C:\). Type `dir a:` and DOS will display all of the files on the disk in the a: drive (if the disk can be read). If the disk cannot be read, go to the "Disk Recovery" section below.
 - If you can see the files on the disk, it means that either Windows cannot read the disk, or one of the files is corrupt. At this point, the best course to try to recover as much data from the disk as possible, but accept that the disk itself is no longer usable.
3. To recover data from the disk, you should copy one file at a time from the disk to the hard drive. Then, open these files and save them to a new disk.
 - At the C:\ type `copy a:\[filename] c:`
(For instance, if the file on the disk you want to copy is named `resume.doc`, you would type `copy a:\resume.doc c:` This will copy that file to the root directory for the user logged in. Likely, the path to it will be something like `c:\Documents and Settings\Melville\resume.doc`)
4. Open Word, browse to this folder, and open the file. If Word can open the file, you can now save it to a new disk. If Word can't open the file, go to the "Disk Recovery" section below.
5. Repeat from Step 3 for every file on the disk that is to be kept.

If these steps do not work, then it means the problem is with the disk itself, and not the files. These 3.5" floppy disks are easily corrupted by temperature, magnetic forces, or improperly ejecting them from the computer (see note at the end of this handout about upgrading).

It might still be possible to recover the data from this disk, but the chance at this point is very low. Further recovery instructions continue on the other side of this sheet.

More Advanced Recovery Steps To Try:

Before moving on,
the patron must understand that their data is probably lost.
Anything else done may completely destroy it, and
the library is not liable in any way for not recovering their data.

Disk Recovery:

1. One way to recover data from the disk is to run "chkdsk" through DOS. To do this, at the C:\, type `chkdsk /f a:`

If it doesn't work the first time, press the up arrow key (to recall the command) and run it again. If it works, you will see a "The type of the file system is FAT." message. At this point, you should be able to open the disk through Windows. If not, at the C:\, type `dir a:` and proceed from the Step 3 above.

If you get a message saying "The type of the file system is RAW." then it means NTFS file-system is corrupt. This can only be addressed using third party software - see the "Third-Party Recovery Software" section below.

Third-Party Recovery Software:

If nothing has worked up to this point, then the only hope is software that is designed to reconstruct data from corrupt disks. However, most of this software is not free, and it cannot be installed on library computers. Further, the library does not endorse, vouch for or support this software.

One package that was recommended to the library is GetDataBack from <http://www.runtime.org/gdb.htm>. It has a free download portion that will show if disk files can be recovered, before you have to buy the full recovery package. The library does not endorse, vouch for or support this software.

DOS Commands:

If you are interested in exploring additional DOS commands that might help in data recovery, a list of them can be found at: <http://www.computerhope.com/msdos.htm>

3.5" Floppy Disks are an all-but-outdated technology

It is being replaced with USB Flash Drives (also called thumb drives, jump drives, etc), which are smaller, more reliable, and can hold much more data.

ASK AT THE REFERENCE DESK about getting a flash drive