

NAPLES COMPUTERS HOW-TO • WINDOWS TIPS

How to Open (and Close) a PST File in Microsoft Outlook

A PST file (Outlook Data File) holds email, calendar items, contacts and tasks saved on your computer, often from an old archive, a backup, or an old computer. This guide shows how to open a PST file in classic Outlook for Windows (Microsoft 365), find your old emails, and close it safely when you're done. Opening a PST doesn't replace your existing email: it shows up as a separate mailbox in the folder list.

What is a PST file?

- ☐ An Outlook Data File (.pst)
Email, calendar, contacts and tasks, saved in one file on your computer
- ☐ Where they come from
Old archives, backups, an old computer, or an email account you no longer use
- ☐ Opening one replaces nothing
It shows up as a separate mailbox, next to yours

Open and close a PST file, step by step

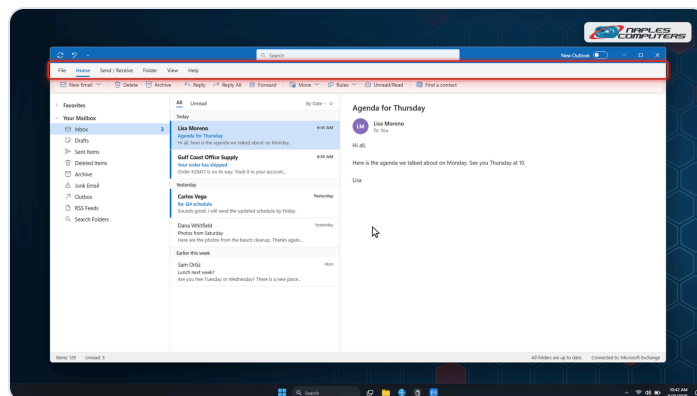
1 Open Outlook, and make sure it's classic Outlook

Click Start, type **outlook**, and open **Outlook (classic)**. Classic Outlook has the File, Home and Send / Receive tabs along the top.

WHAT TO DO

Check the top-right corner: the **NEW OUTLOOK**

switch should be off. If it's on, turn it off to go back to classic Outlook.



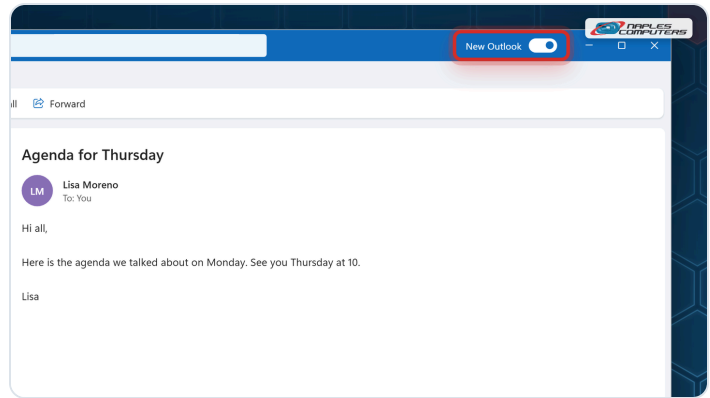
NEW OUTLOOK?

1 In the new Outlook? Turn the New Outlook switch off

The new Outlook has a **New Outlook** switch at the top right, turned on. These steps are for classic Outlook.

WHAT TO DO

Click the switch to turn it off. The new Outlook closes and classic Outlook opens.

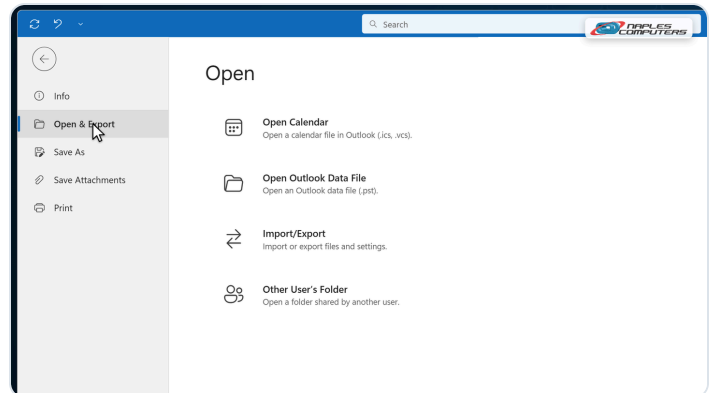


2 Click File, then Open & Export

Click **File** in the upper-left corner of Outlook. The File menu lists Info, Open & Export, Save As, Save Attachments and Print.

WHAT TO DO

Click
OPEN & EXPORT

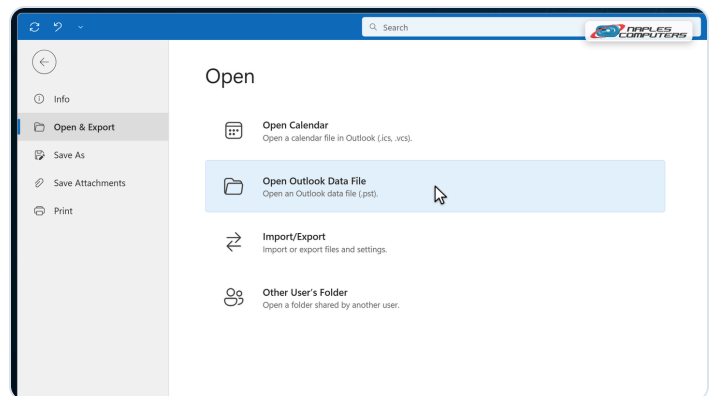


3 Click Open Outlook Data File

On the Open & Export page, the choices are Open Calendar, **Open Outlook Data File**, Import/Export and Other User's Folder.

WHAT TO DO

Click
OPEN OUTLOOK DATA FILE
("Open an Outlook data file (.pst)"). A window opens so you can find the file.



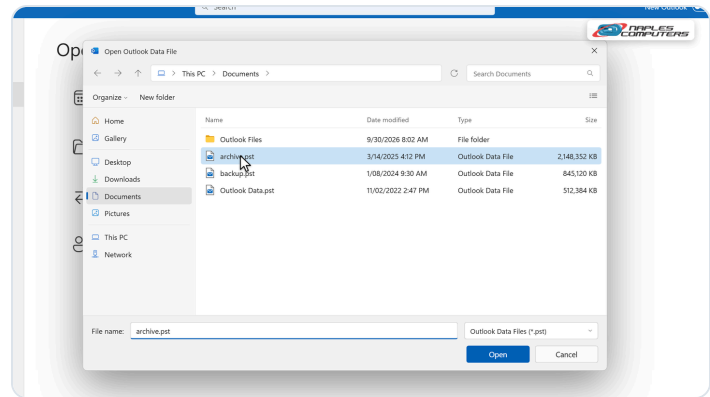
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Browse to your PST file, select it and click Open

Browse to the folder where the PST file is saved, for example **Documents**.

WHAT TO DO

Click the file (for example **ARCHIVE.PST**), then click **OPEN**



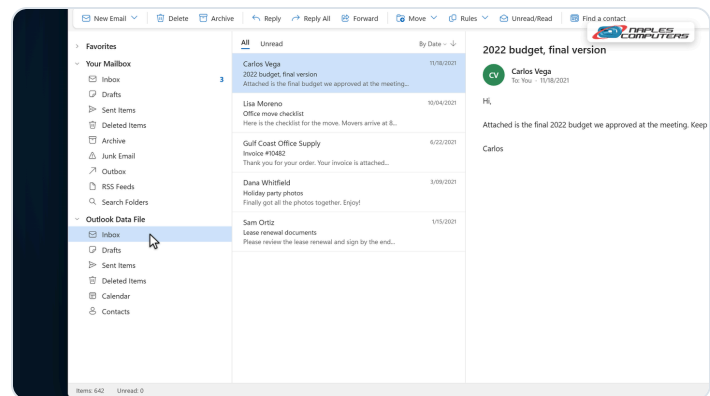
5

Find your old emails under "Outlook Data File"

Back in the main Outlook window, a new mailbox appears in the folder list, usually called **Outlook Data File**.

WHAT TO DO

Click the arrow next to it to expand it: **Inbox**, **Sent Items**, **Calendar**, **Contacts** and more. Click a folder to see what's inside.



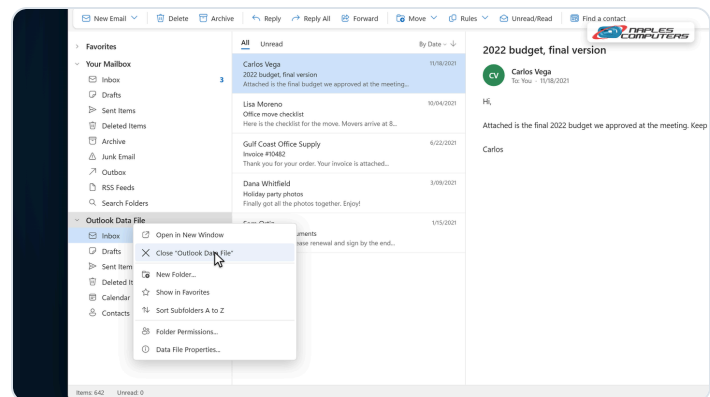
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When you're done, right-click it and choose Close "Outlook Data File"

When you're finished, right-click the name of the PST in the folder list (**Outlook Data File**, or the file's own name).

WHAT TO DO

Choose **CLOSE "OUTLOOK DATA FILE"**

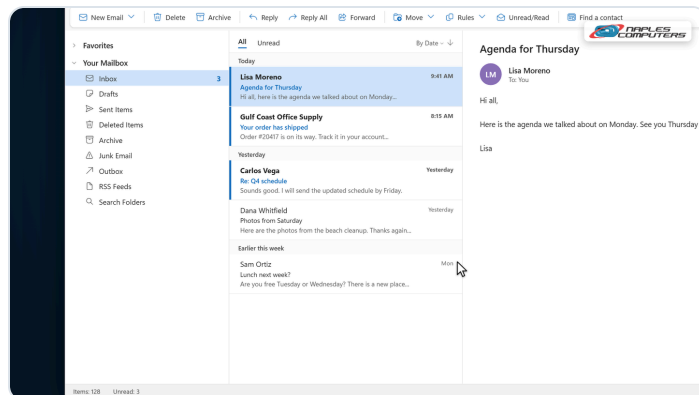


7 The PST file is closed

The PST file disappears from your folder list. Your main mailbox is unchanged.

WHAT TO DO

The file itself stays saved on your computer, right where it was. Open it again any time with steps 2 to 4.



Step 8: always keep a backup of your PST

- ☐ Changes save straight into the file
Deleting, moving or editing items in an open PST changes that file, and can be permanent
- ☐ Keep a separate backup copy
Before you open it or make changes, copy the PST to another folder or drive
- ☐ Close Outlook before you copy it
Outlook keeps the file in use while it's running

Good to know

- ☐ Your existing email isn't touched
Opening a PST doesn't overwrite or replace anything
- ☐ The PST stays separate
It isn't merged into your main mailbox
- ☐ Don't move or delete it while Outlook is using it
Close it in Outlook first
- ☐ Folders not showing?
Go to View → Folder Pane → Normal

When to call us

- ☐ The PST won't open, or seems corrupted
Don't keep retrying: make a copy and call us

- ☐ Emails missing after a move or migration
New computer, new email account, or a new provider

- ☐ Moving to Microsoft 365
We'll bring your old email along

Recap: open & close a PST file

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Use classic Outlook (New Outlook off) | ☐ Pick your .pst file → Open |
| ☐ File → Open & Export | ☐ Expand "Outlook Data File" |
| ☐ Open Outlook Data File | ☐ Done? Right-click → Close |

Always keep a backup copy of your PST file. Anything you change inside an open PST (deleting, moving or editing items) is saved straight into that file and can be permanent. Close Outlook before you copy the PST. PST won't open, looks corrupted, or emails went missing after a migration? Call us at 239-513-1960, or join a remote session from [naplescomputers.com](https://www.naplescomputers.com).



PST file won't open, or emails missing after a move? We can help, in person or remotely.

Call 239-513-1960

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