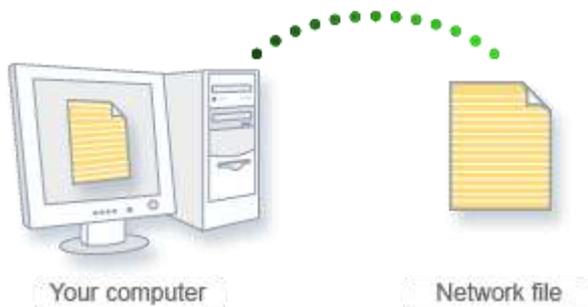


Understanding offline files

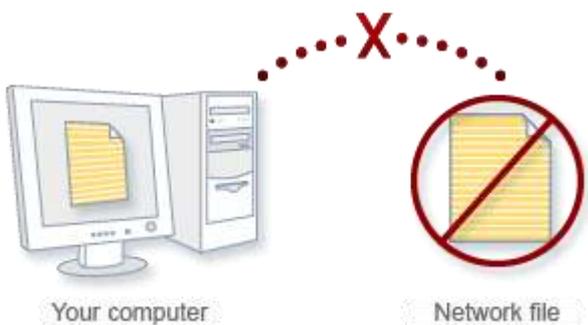
Introduction

If you've ever needed to access important files stored in a shared folder on your network but couldn't because the network connection was unavailable, then you can understand the need for offline files. Using offline files, you can access files stored in shared network folders even when the network copies are unavailable. You can do this by choosing the network files you want to make available offline, which automatically creates a copy of the network files on your computer. These copies of network files that are stored on your computer are called *offline files*. Windows will automatically sync your offline files for you and open them whenever the network versions are unavailable.

You can access network files when you can connect to the computer where the network files are stored



You can access local copies of network files when you can't connect to the computer where the network files are stored.



Reasons to use offline files

Offline files offer several advantages to anyone who works with files stored on shared network folders. By working with offline files, you can:

- **Protect yourself from network outages.** When you use offline files, it doesn't matter if your network goes down or the network folder you are accessing becomes unavailable. If either occurs, Windows will automatically begin accessing the offline copies of files stored on your computer instead of the files on the network folder, and you can continue working without interruption.
- **Work with files while you are away from the network.** When you disconnect from the network, you normally lose the ability to access any files stored on the network. But with offline files, you can disconnect from

the network and still have copies of all the network files you have made available offline. This can be particularly useful if you travel with a mobile PC.

- **Easily sync with network files.** Anytime you want to sync with the latest version of files in a network folder, offline files lets you do so with the click of a single button.
- **Boost your efficiency when working over a slow connection.** When you are connected to your network with a slow connection, working with files on a shared network folder can be inefficient and slow. Offline files insulates you from this problem by allowing you to easily switch to working with offline copies of your network files at any time.

Keeping your offline files in sync

When you select a network file or folder to make available offline, Windows automatically creates a copy of that file or folder on your computer. Anytime you re-connect to that network folder, Windows will sync the files between your computer and the network folder. You can also sync them manually at any time.

That's all you really need to know to keep your offline files in sync. However, for the curious, here are some additional details:

- If you are working offline and make changes to offline files from a network folder, Windows will automatically sync any changes you made to the files the next time you connect to that network folder.
- If you are working offline while someone else changes files in a shared network folder, Windows will sync those changes with the offline files on your computer the next time you connect to that network folder. If you have also changed the files since you last connected to the network folder, a sync conflict will occur and Windows will ask you which version you want to keep.
- You can resolve these and other sync conflicts by using Sync Center.
- If Windows encounters a problem when trying to sync offline files between your computer and a network folder (for example, if the network folder you are trying to sync with is unavailable), a sync error will occur.

How to setup offline files

Three steps are involved in setting up your or your user's Windows XP Professional computer to use Offline Files:

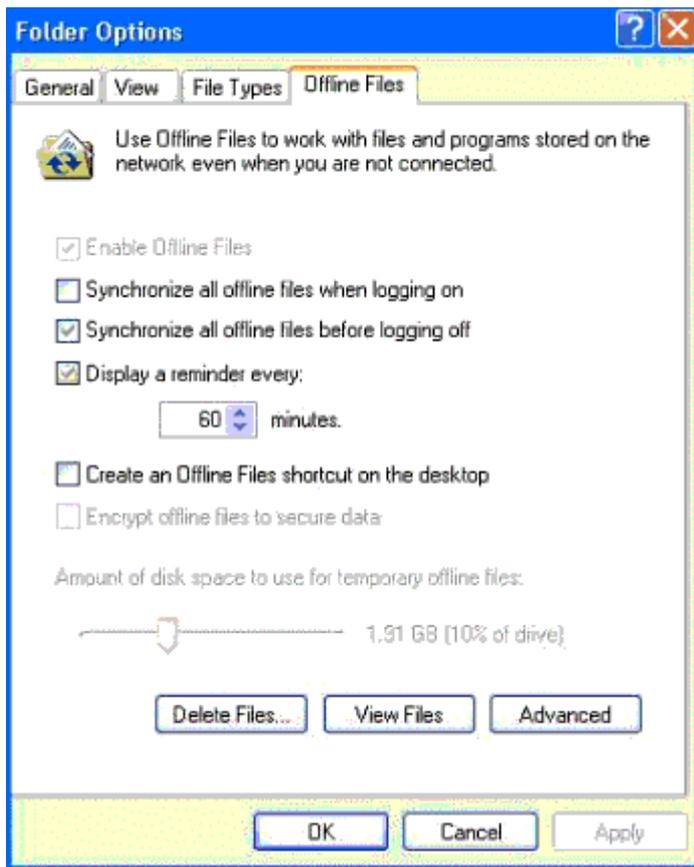
1. Enable the Offline Files feature.
2. Make one or more files or folders available offline.
3. Configure Offline Files settings to control caching options and disconnection response.

Enabling Offline Files

Before you can make any content available offline, you must enable the use of Offline Files on your computer.

1. Click on the Start button and open My Computer.
2. Select the Tools menu at the top of the window and Click Folder Options.

3. Select the Offline Files tab.



Important

Before you begin Offline Files configuration, ensure that Fast User Switching is disabled on the client. To do so, open the Control Panel and select User Accounts. From the list of tasks presented, choose Change the way users log on Or off and clear the Use Fast User Switching check box.

Check the box to enable Offline Files. This page is also used to configure Offline Files settings, which will be discussed in the next section.

Configuring Offline Files settings

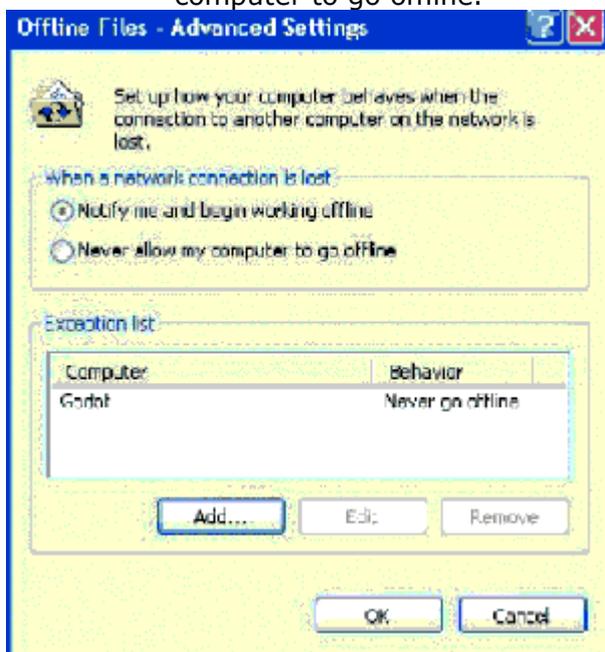
On the Offline Files page, in addition to enabling Offline Files, you can also specify:

- Whether the system should synchronize all offline files before logging on to the computer.
- Whether the system should synchronize all offline files before logging off when you log off, restart, or shut down the computer. This will ensure that you have the most up-to-date versions of the files you have designated to be available offline.
- Whether to enable reminders, which will cause a notification balloon to appear over the system tray when a computer goes offline. If you select this option, you can also specify, in minutes, how often the reminder balloon should be displayed after the computer goes offline.
- Whether a shortcut icon for the Offline Files folder should be created on the desktop.

- Whether to encrypt offline files as an extra security precaution for the user who has sensitive data on his or her hard drive.
- The amount of disk space allocated for storing offline files that are automatically cached because an administrator has specified that they be made available offline. This does not affect the files that the user has made available offline.

You can also use these buttons

- **Delete Files:** Use this button to remove selected offline files from the local computer. (This doesn't delete those files from the network location.)
- **View Files:** Use this to view the contents of the Offline Files folder, which shows all files that have been made available offline, along with their type, synchronization information, availability, access, location, size in KBs when last modified, and the status of the server.
- **Advanced:** With this, you can choose what will happen if you're working online (connected to the network) and the connection is lost. Your choices are to have the system notify you that you're offline and allow you to continue working with network resources offline or to never allow the computer to go offline.



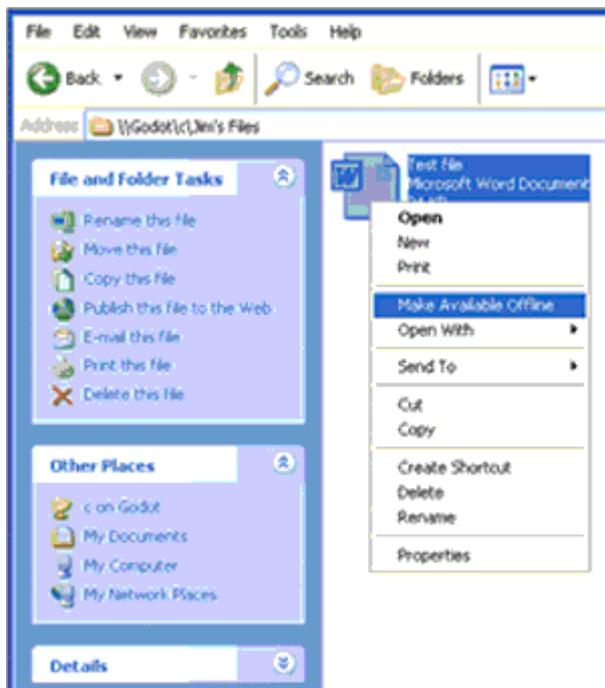
On the Offline Files tab click on the **Advanced** button to reach the Advanced Settings page, where you can create an exception list and designate the behavior when a particular server gets disconnected. For example, in Figure above, the default behavior when a network connection is lost is to notify and begin working offline, but if a connection to the computer named Godot is lost, the setting specifies that this computer should not go offline.

Making files and folders available offline

To make a file or folder available offline, it must first be shared.

1. After enabling Offline Files, all you have to do is navigate to the selected shared file or folder in **My Computer** or **My Network Places** then highlight the file or

folder name, either select the File menu or right-click the file or folder, then choose **Make Available Offline**.



Setting caching options on shared folders

Offline Files works by creating a cache on the computer's local hard disk and storing the shared network files that are designated as offline files in this cache. You configure the caching options for each shared folder made available offline. The caching options are set from the Shared Folders node in the Computer Management MMC (accessed by right-clicking My Computer and selecting Manage).

1. Right-click the shared folder for which you want to set caching properties and select Properties. On the General tab,
2. Click the Caching button. The Caching Settings properties box



3. Enable caching of the shared folder by selecting the check box. Three options are available to control how the files in the folder will be cached:
 - **Manual Caching For Documents:** With this option, the only documents that will be cached are those that the user specifically designates to be available offline.
 - **Automatic Caching For Documents:** With this option, when a user opens a file in this shared folder, it will be automatically downloaded and made available offline without the user specifying that it be an offline file. Older copies of a file will be deleted automatically to make room for files that have been accessed more recently. With this option, a file that the user has not opened while online will not be available offline.
 - **Automatic Caching For Programs:** All files in the folder will be made available offline. This option is used when the data in the folder is read-only, as with shared network applications. It shouldn't be used if users will change the data in the folder.

Tip: The default caching setting is **Manual Caching For Documents**.

Using Offline Files

After you've set up the computer to enable Offline Files and made the selected files or folders available offline, other users can connect to the offline files and work with them over the network and then continue working with them after the connection between your computer and theirs is broken.

Working offline

If Offline Files is configured to display a balloon notification, when the network connection is broken, the user will see an Offline Files icon appear in the status area to the right of the taskbar buttons on the Windows XP taskbar.

When the network connection is restored (for example, when you plug your laptop back into the docking station or plug a live Ethernet cable into its PC Card NIC), the status-bar information will change, and modifications that you have made to offline files since the disconnection will be updated to the network files automatically.

Synchronizing Offline Files

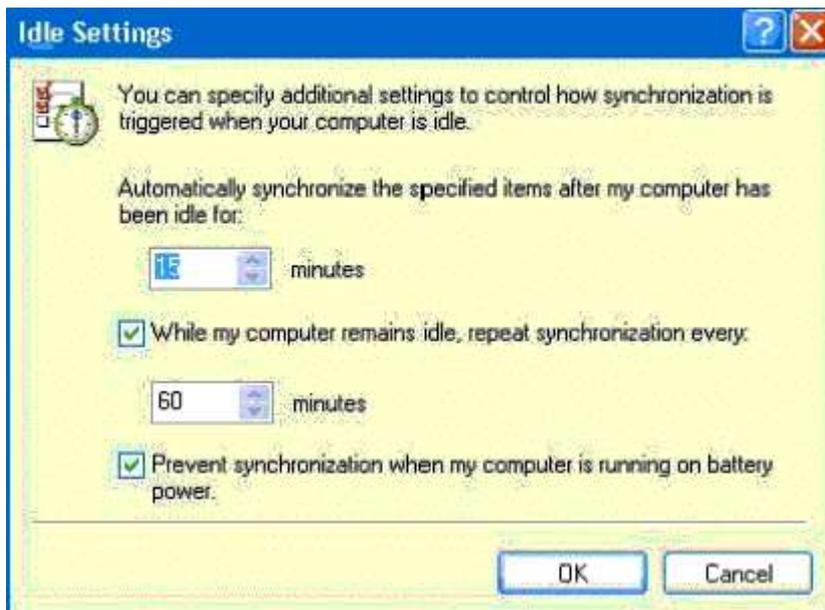
You can synchronize offline files manually. You can also schedule them to be synchronized at a specified time with the Synchronization Manager.

The two types of synchronization are:

- **Full synchronization:** A full sync takes more time, but it ensures that every file made available offline is the most up-to-date version.
- **Quick synchronization:** A quick sync will provide you with a full version of each offline file, but it may not be the most up-to-date version. It is, however, much faster to perform.

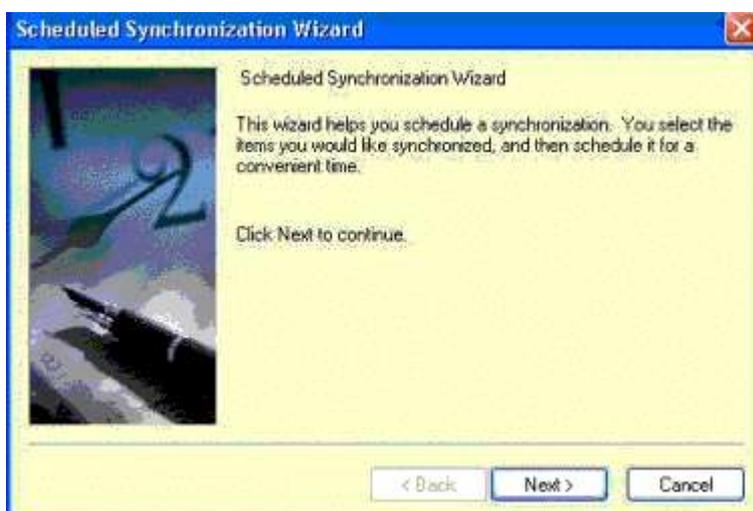
To open the Synchronization Manager:

- Select **Start**, Click **All Programs**, Click **Accessories**, and then Click **Synchronize**. The Synchronization settings that can be configured when you click the **Setup** button include:
- Items that should be synchronized when you log on or off. You can specify that this occur automatically or that the system prompt you before synchronizing.
- Items that should be synchronized when the computer is idle. Using the **Advanced** button on this tab, you can set an idle time (in minutes) when synchronization should occur and how often it should take place while the computer remains idle.



Tip: Check the last box on the Idle Settings dialog box to prevent synchronization from occurring while your portable computer is running on battery power, to avoid draining the batteries.

Using the **Scheduled Synchronization** tab, you can set times for synchronization to occur automatically. Clicking the **Add** button on this tab will invoke the Scheduled Synchronization Wizard.



With the wizard, you can select a time and day when you want the synchronization to start and how often synchronization should occur. You'll then be asked to give the synchronization job a name, and it will be entered into the list of current synchronization tasks.

Tip: You can manually synchronize an individual file or folder by selecting it in Windows Explorer or My Computer and selecting Tools | Synchronize.

Understanding and resolving file conflicts

If more than one person works with the same offline files, the possibility of file conflicts arises. There can be differing versions of the file to which different modifications have been made. When you synchronize files, those that you have modified since disconnecting from the network will be compared to the versions of those same files on the network server. Your changes will be copied to the network versions—if no one else has modified the network files while you were working offline.

If someone else did change the files during that time, a file conflict arises. Which version should be kept on the network—the one copied to the network while you were offline or the one containing the modifications you made while offline? You'll be asked to choose one of the following:

- Keep Your Version Of The File
- Keep The Version On The Network
- Keep Both Versions

If you elect to keep both versions, you'll need to give your version a different name. Both versions will be saved to your local disk and the network server.