

Locating Lost or Missing Files on your Computer

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The information in this article applies to:



QUESTION

My Chief Architect or Home Designer file was here yesterday, but today it seems to be missing. Where is the first place I should look for my missing plan or layout* file?

*Layout files are only available in Chief Architect Premier, Chief Architect Interiors and Home Designer Pro.

ANSWER

Chief Architect programs save files to the location on your computer that you have chosen to save them; the program cannot delete files from your system.

In this article, we will discuss how to check your Recycle Bin/Trash and search your operating system for lost or missing Chief Architect files. If you're unable to locate the original file you were working on, you may be able to locate a backup of the file within the Chief Architect or Home Designer Archives.

To check your deleted items in the Recycle Bin/Trash

1. Oftentimes, "lost" files are files that have simply been deleted - either accidentally or intentionally. Check your Windows **Recycle Bin** or **Trash**.

You should check your Recycle Bin/Trash immediately, as continued write activity increases the possibility of an unrecoverable loss.

2. For more information on the Recycle Bin/Trash, please see the appropriate link for your operating system below.
 - [Windows 10 / 11 \(https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/find-the-recycle-bin-885cf298-0f98-a548-9427-a1248fce4315\)](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/find-the-recycle-bin-885cf298-0f98-a548-9427-a1248fce4315)
 - [macOS Sonoma 14 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/14.0/mac/14.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/14.0/mac/14.0)
 - [macOS Ventura 13 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/13.0/mac/13.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/13.0/mac/13.0)
 - [macOS Monterey 12 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/12.0/mac/12.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mchlp1093/12.0/mac/12.0)
 - [macOS Big Sur 11.0 \(https://support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/delete-files-and-folders-on-mac-mchlp1093/11.0/mac/11.0\)](https://support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/delete-files-and-folders-on-mac-mchlp1093/11.0/mac/11.0)

Not all versions of Chief Architect will be supported on every operating system listed above.

Please check the System Requirements for your version of [Chief Architect](https://www.chiefarchitect.com/support/article/KB-02761/chief-architect-minimum-system-requirements.html) (https://www.chiefarchitect.com/support/article/KB-02761/chief-architect-minimum-system-requirements.html) or [Home Designer](https://www.homedesignersoftware.com/support/article/KB-01095/home-designer-minimum-system-requirements.html) (https://www.homedesignersoftware.com/support/article/KB-01095/home-designer-minimum-system-requirements.html) if you have any questions as to whether or not your version is supported under your operating system.

The third party information presented in this document was verified at its writing, however, it's subject to change.

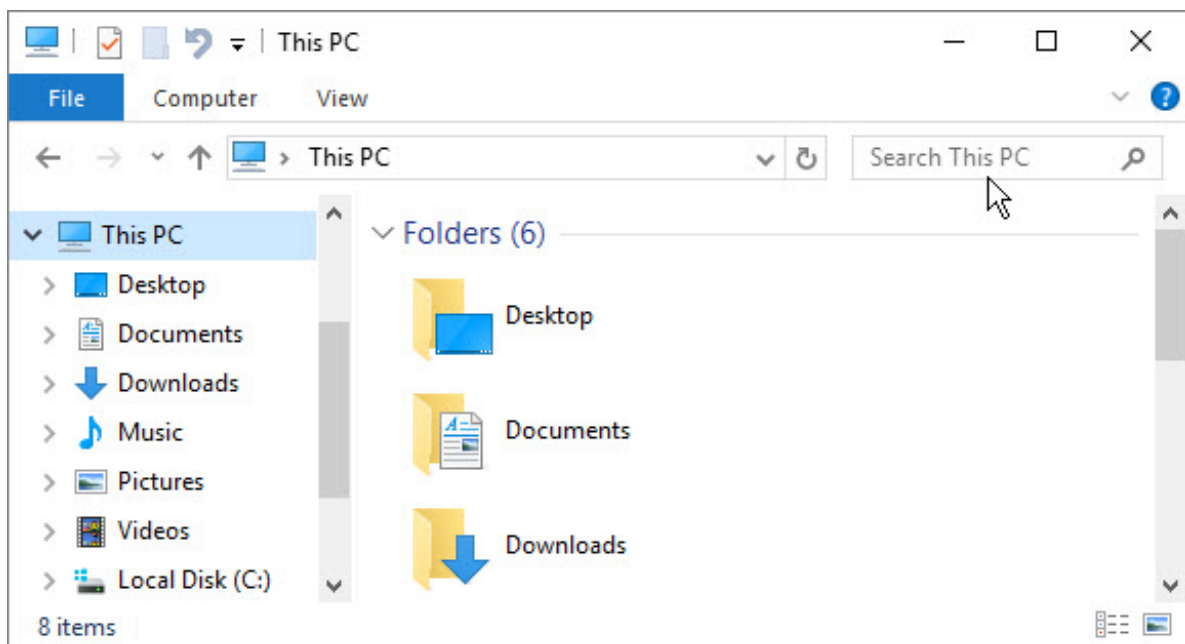
If the missing or lost files cannot be located in your operating system's Recycle Bin or Trash, it is possible they haven't been deleted, but may be at a different location than you initially checked. Use the search function in your operating system to locate them.

To search for files on Windows

1. Open File Explorer by clicking the **File Explorer** icon on your taskbar.



2. In the upper right of the Explorer Window, there is a Search box. The search will look in all the folders and sub folders in the current location.



- Try searching for the exact name of your lost file.
- To pull up only files with the .plan extension, type in ***.plan**
- To pull up only files with the .layout extension, type in ***.layout**
*Layout files are only available in Chief Architect Premier, Chief Architect Interiors and Home Designer Pro

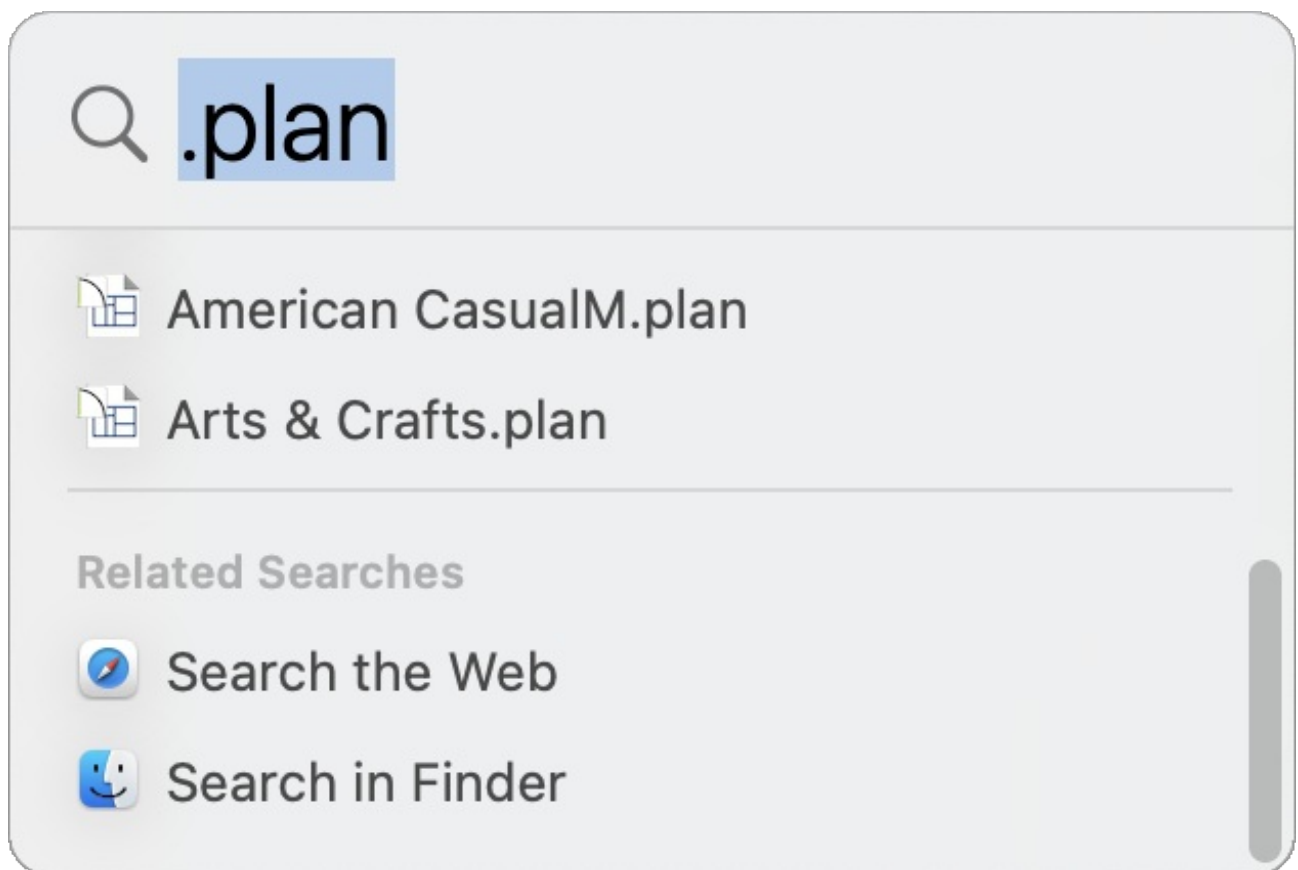
- Sort by the Date Modified in order to quickly locate the most recent files.
3. To learn more about searching your Windows computer for files, please see the link below.
- [Windows Search and privacy \(https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/windows-search-and-privacy-99fb8251-7260-1cd6-1bbb-15c2370eb168\)](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/windows-search-and-privacy-99fb8251-7260-1cd6-1bbb-15c2370eb168)

To search for files on macOS

1. Click on the **Spotlight** tool (Magnifying glass) located in the top right corner of the menu bar.



2. Type in **.plan** to search for plan files.



3. Scroll down and click on the **Search in Finder** option to show every plan file and its location on your system.

4. To learn more about searching for files on a Mac, please see the appropriate link below.
 - [Searching on macOS Sonoma 14 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/14.0/mac/14.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/14.0/mac/14.0)
 - [Searching on macOS Ventura 13 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/13.0/mac/13.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/13.0/mac/13.0)
 - [Searching on macOS Monterey 12 \(https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/12.0/mac/12.0\)](https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/mac-help/mh15155/12.0/mac/12.0)
 - [Searching on macOS Big Sur 11.0 \(https://support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/narrow-search-results-mh15155/11.0/mac/11.0\)](https://support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/narrow-search-results-mh15155/11.0/mac/11.0)

Accessing the archives

If you encountered a power failure or forced system restart before you were able to save your most recent changes in the file, you may be able to locate a recent backup which has much of the data still saved in it.

To learn more, please see the "Accessing Your Archive Files" resource in the [Related Articles](#) section below.

Archive files are meant to be for emergency use only and should not be used as your primary backup method for plan and layout files.

If you do not already have a backup system in place, please see "Backing up Chief Architect Content" in the [Related Articles](#) section below.

Seek professional assistance

If you are not able to access your hard drive, or if you are unable to find your missing data, contact a computer professional in your area.

Alternatively, use another computer to search the Internet for a data recovery expert, as you may be experiencing a hard drive failure resulting in data loss that could become more serious as time goes on.

For future reference on how Chief Architect recommends organizing your files, please see the "Organizing your Plan and Layout Files" linked in the [Related Articles](#) section below.

Related Articles


[📄 Accessing Your Archive Files \(/support/article/KB-00099/accessing-your-archive-files.html\)](/support/article/KB-00099/accessing-your-archive-files.html)

[📄 Backing up Chief Architect Content \(/support/article/KB-00001/backing-up-chief-architect-content.html\)](/support/article/KB-00001/backing-up-chief-architect-content.html)

[📄 Organizing your Plan and Layout Files \(/support/article/KB-00562/organizing-your-plan-and-layout-files.html\)](/support/article/KB-00562/organizing-your-plan-and-layout-files.html)



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