

# ORGANIZING COMPUTER FILES

## Naming Files

- Give files specific names that will be meaningful to you later on:
  - Bad: "agenda.doc"
  - Better: "agenda\_072501.doc"
- Most programs automatically add the correct "file extension"—a 3-letter addition to the end of the filename that identifies the type of file to your computer (.doc = MS Word document; .wpd = WordPerfect document). In general, do not alter the file extension.
- In general, don't use filenames containing punctuation or spaces, as some programs become confused by such special characters. Some programs are also sensitive to letter case (i.e., capitalization), though this causes fewer problems.
  - Bad: "Alcott's Little Women -- An Analysis.wpd"
  - Better: "LittleWomenAnalysis.wpd"

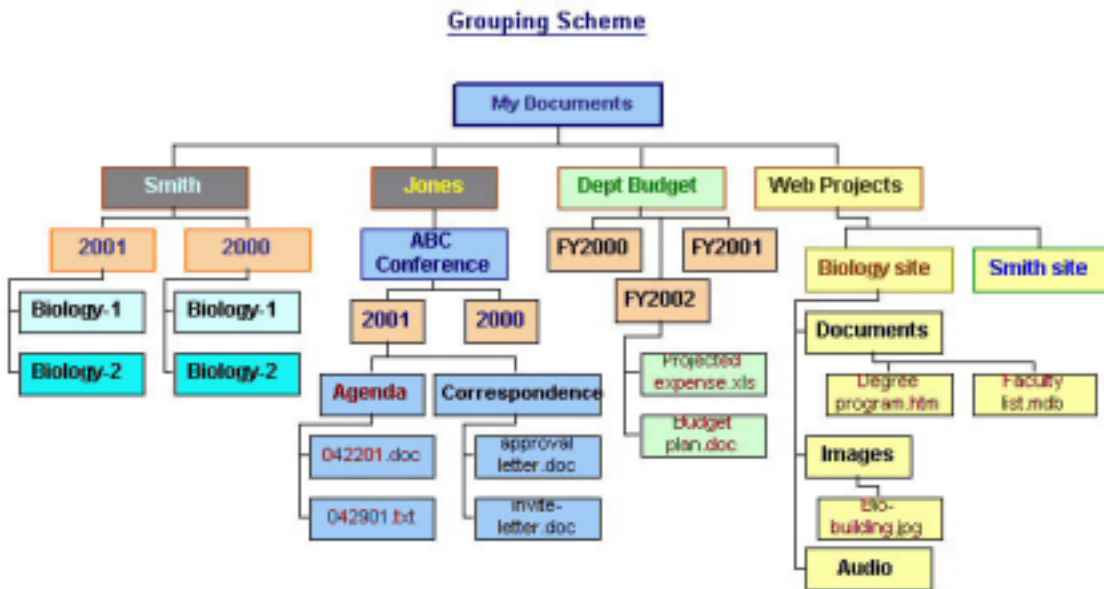
## Naming Folders

- Name folders logically, according to any combination of the following categories:
  - Project, subject, or proper name
    - ENWR 110
    - MLA Conference
    - Letters of Recommendation
    - Shakespeare
  - Date (Note that files and folders are sorted alphanumerically, so you might want to use numbers rather than names for dates.)
    - 03-2003 (Best: when sorted, will follow "02-2003")
    - 3-03 (Good, but when sorted, will follow "10-03")
    - 2003 Spring (Good, but when sorted, will follow "2003 Fall")
    - March 2003 (Good, but when sorted, will follow "April 2003")
  - File type
    - Images
    - Music
    - Spreadsheets
    - Documents

## Grouping Folders

- Keep applications (i.e., programs) and documents in separate folders:
  - C:\Program Files
  - C:\My Downloads
  - C:\My Documents

- Nest folders in an upside-down tree structure, with fewer folders at the top and more folders at the bottom. This will allow you to locate files more easily and to back up files by dragging a single folder to a backup location:



- If you work on more than one computer, keep track of your work using one of the following systems:
  - Create wholly separate, uniquely-named file structures for each computer (e.g., "My Laptop Documents" and "My Office Documents") and back up these folders separately to floppy or Zip disks, CDs, and/or the Home Directory.
  - Create an identical file structure on every computer. Keep files that you're currently editing on the Desktop or in a special folder (e.g., "Current Documents" or "My Briefcase"). When you're finished with a current file, move it to the proper folder on your primary work space (for instance, the C:\ drive of your home computer) and back up that folder regularly to other locations.
  - Create an identical file structure on every computer, and keep track of which version of a file is the most recent by checking its date in My Computer or Windows Explorer via View → Details → Date Modified.

## Maintaining Files and Folders

- Check and re-organize your file and folder structure periodically—for instance, at the end of every semester.
- Back up your files periodically—for instance, at the end of every week. Use one hard drive (C:\) as your primary work space, and then back up those files to disks, CDs, and/or to the Home Directory.