

How to Format a Floppy Disk

Need to format that ancient floppy disk? Windows and Mac both have built in formatting tools, or you can use the Windows Command Prompt for even more control. Formatting your disk will erase everything on it, so ensure that you have any...

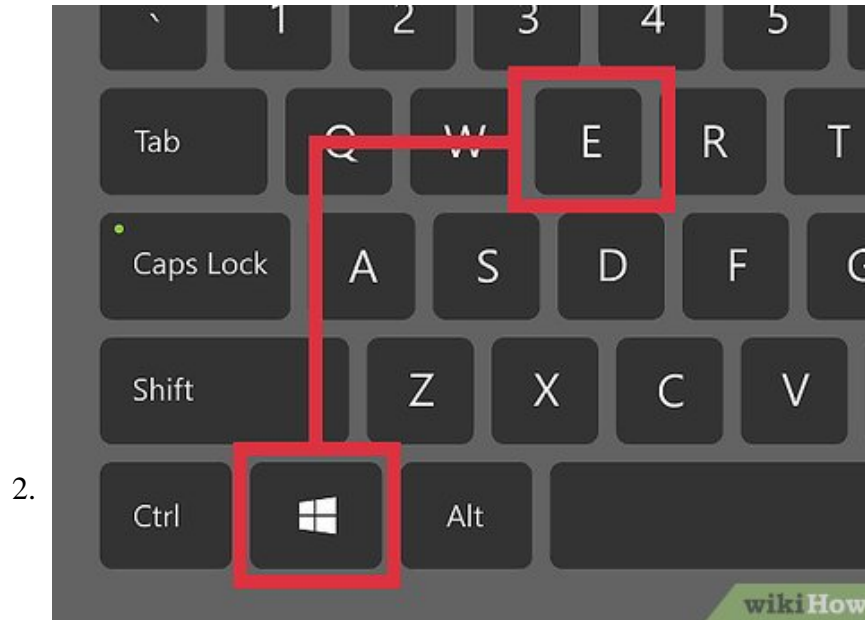
Method 1 of 3:

Using Windows Explorer



Insert the floppy disk. Make sure that the disk is inserted before you go looking for it on your computer. Ensure that the disk is inserted rightside-up.

1. Make sure that the disk lock is not engaged before inserting the disk.
2. When formatting a disk, all the information contained on it will be erased, so make sure you've backed up anything you need to save.

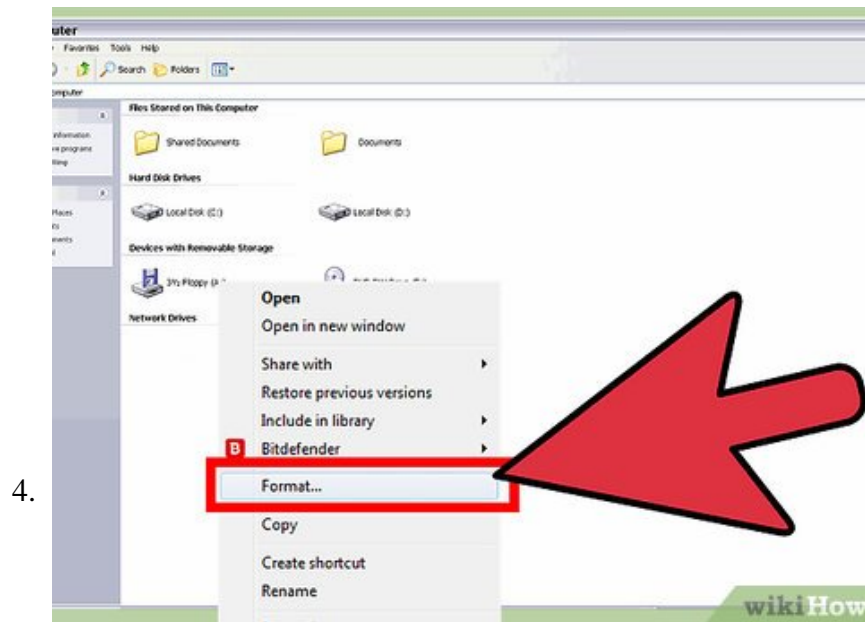


Open up your Computer/My Computer/This PC window. The label for this window will be different depending on the version of Windows you are running. In Windows XP, it is called My Computer and can be accessed from the Start menu. In Windows Vista and 7, it is called Computer and can be accessed from the Start menu. In Windows 8 it is called This PC and can be accessed from the taskbar.

1. All Windows users can open this window by pressing **Win + E**.



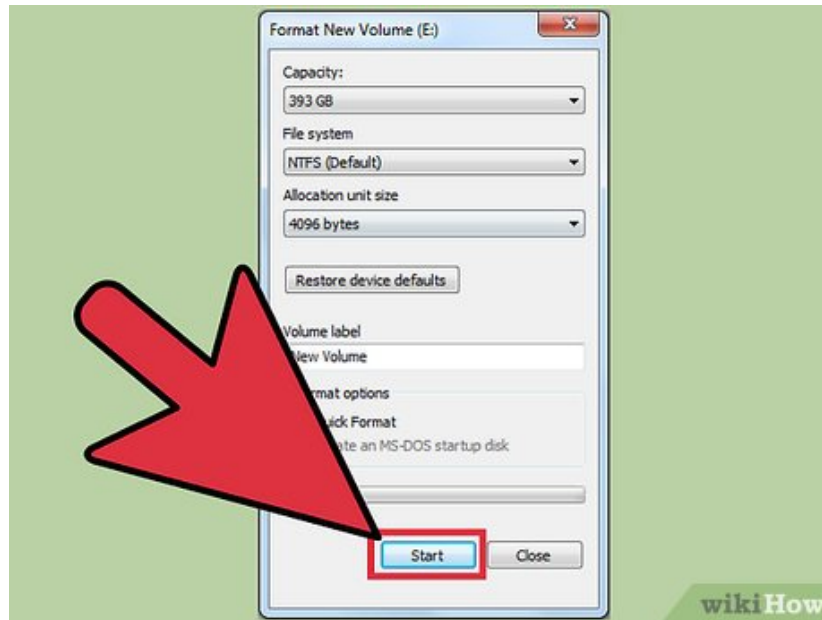
Right-click on the disk. You should see the disk in your list of drives. It should have a floppy disk icon, though not all Windows versions show the same thing. Floppy drives are usually B : or A : .



Select "Format" and choose your settings. This will open the Format window. You can use this window to choose your format settings before beginning.

1. Capacity - This should be set to 3.5", 1.44 MB. Most users can leave this as is.
2. File system - This should be set to FAT. Most users can leave this as is, unless you are formatting the disk for use with a specific file system. FAT is supported on Windows, Mac, and Linux.
3. Allocation unit size - This should be set to Default allocation size. Most users can leave this at default.
4. Volume label - Choose a name for the disk that will appear when it is inserted. Try to keep it to 16 characters or less.
5. Format options. You can select "Quick Format" to format the disk quicker, but the data will not be securely deleted. The speed gains for quick formatting a floppy disk are negligible, so you're probably best leaving this unchecked. You can also choose to create an MS-DOS startup disk, which is useful if you're troubleshooting an older machine, but you won't be able to use the disk for storage.

5.

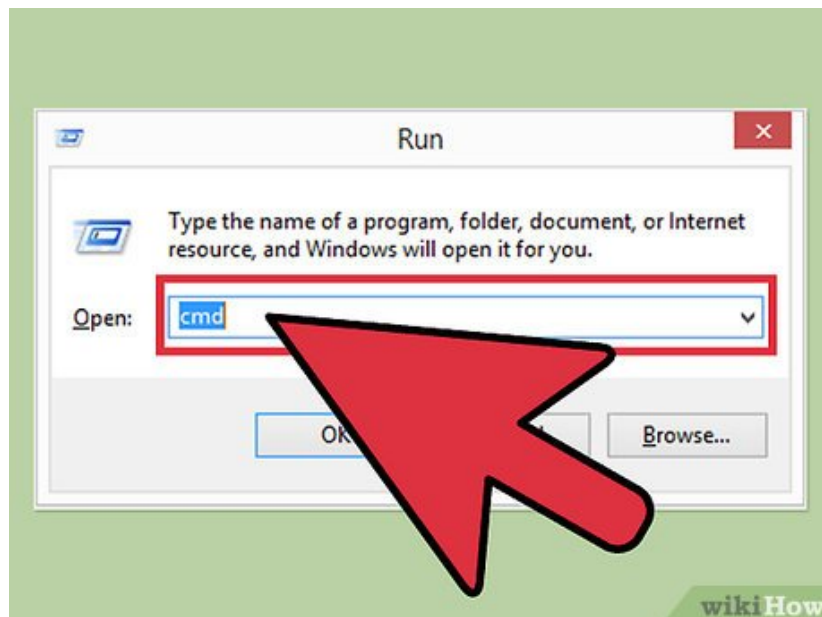


Start the format. Once you've selected your options, click **Start** to begin the format process. Click **OK** to confirm. You monitor the progress by looking at the bar at the bottom of the window.

Method 2 of 3:

Using the Command Prompt (Windows)

1.



Open the Command Prompt. You can access this from the Start menu, or by pressing **Win + R** and typing `cmd`.

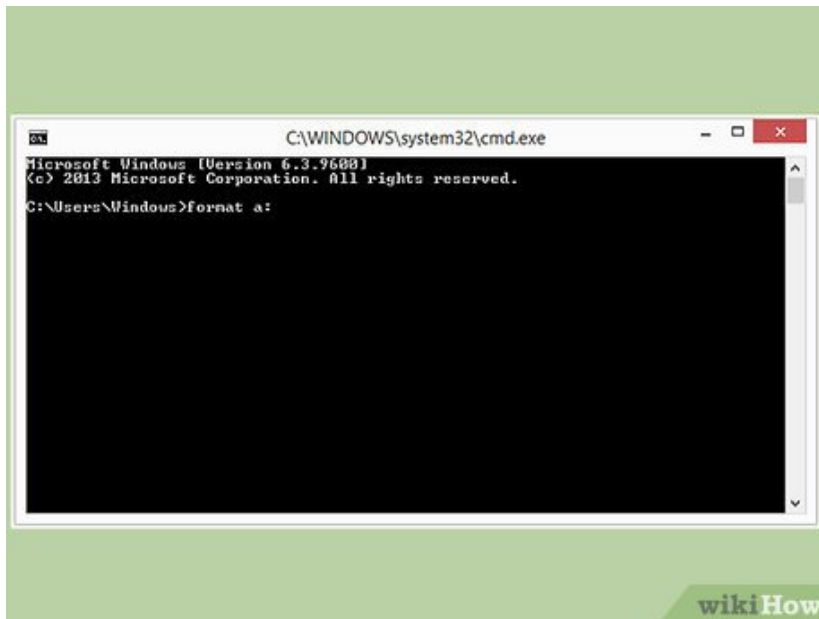
2.



Insert the disk. Make sure that the disk is inserted before you go looking for it on your computer. Ensure that the disk is inserted rightside-up.

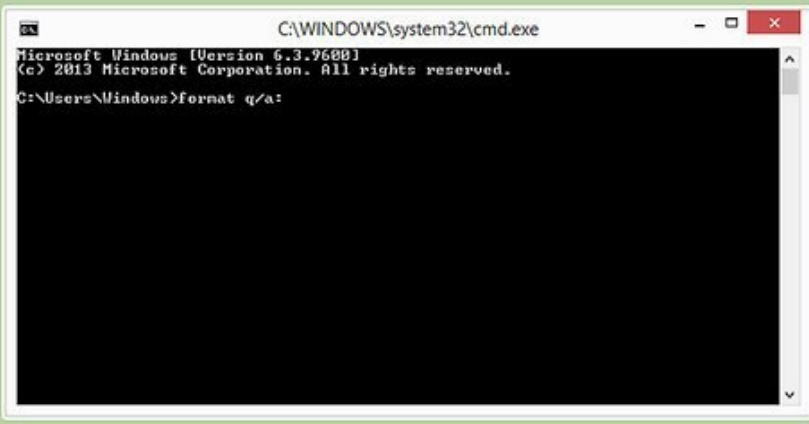
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3.



Perform a basic format. To quickly format the disk, type `format x:`. Replace `X` with the floppy drive letter. Press `Y` to confirm that you want to format the disk.

4.



```
C:\WINDOWS\system32\cmd.exe
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.3.9600]
(c) 2013 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
C:\Users\Windows>format q/a:
```

Add switches to modify the format process. There are several switches that you can add to the end of the `format` command to modify what happens. For example, to perform a Quick Format on the A: drive, you would type `format /q a: .`

1. `/fs:filesystem` - Replace *filesystem* with FAT, FAT32, exFAT, NTFS, or UDF depending on your needs.
2. `/v:label` - Replace *label* with the label you want to give the disk. Keep it under 16 characters for compatibility.
3. `/q` - Performs a quick format.
4. `/c` - Files added will be automatically compressed (NTFS only)
5. `/p:#` - Overwrites the space on the disk with 0s and then random numbers for each count. Replace # with the number of counts you want to occur. This is best used for sensitive data you want to completely erase (Vista and later only).^[1]

Method 3 of 3:

Using OS X

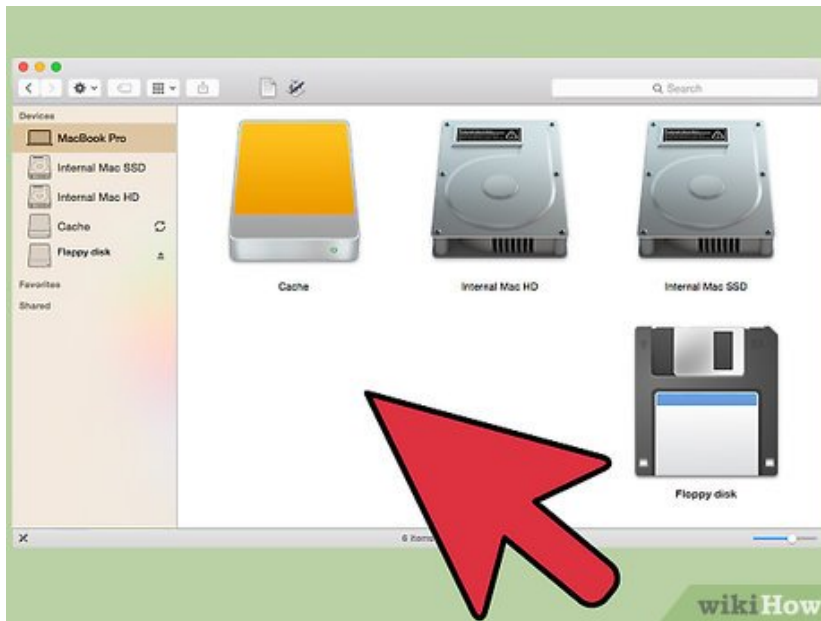
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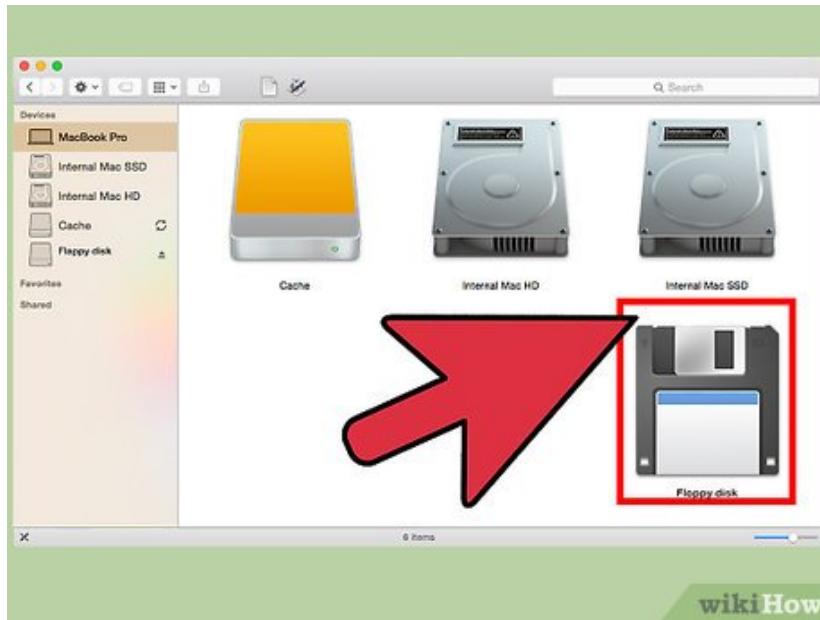
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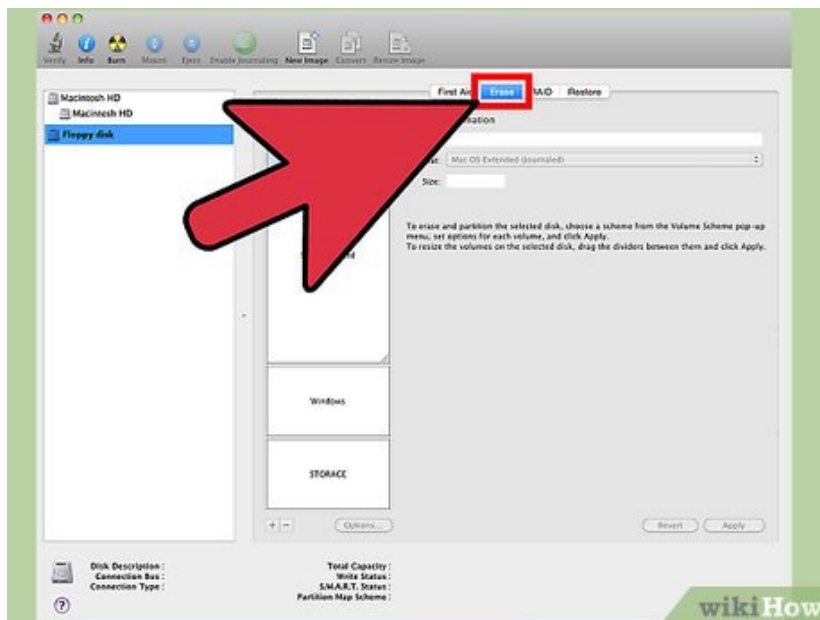
Open the Disk Utility program. You can access this by clicking the Go menu, selecting Utilities, and then selecting Disk Utility.

3.

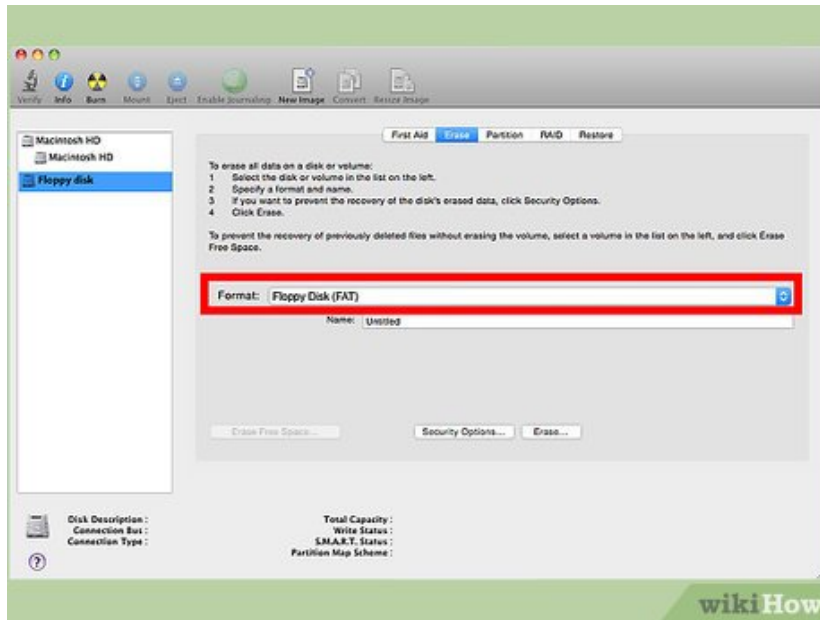


Select the floppy disk. It will be listed in the left frame of the Disk Utilities window.

4.



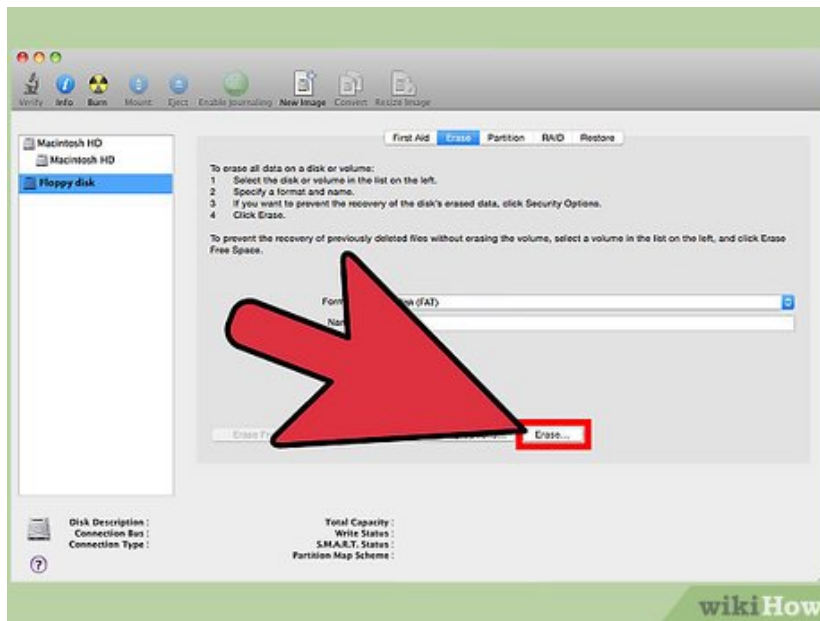
Click the "Erase" tab. This is located in the right frame of the Disk Utilities window.



5.

Select the format. In the Volume Format drop down menu, select "Mac OS Standard" if you only plan on using the disk with other Macs. If you want to use it with multiple operating systems, select "FAT".

1. You can label the disk by typing a label in the "Name" field.



6.

Start the format. Click to begin the formatting process. You monitor the progress by looking at the bar in the Disk Utility window.

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