A disk drive provides access to information on a disk. Each disk drive is given a letter of the alphabet to identify it.

The letters A and B are reserved for floppy disk drives. Most computers have at least one floppy disk drive. Floppy disks come in two sizes:
• 3.5 inch - able to hold 1,457,664 bytes (or characters) of information - this is the normal type of floppy disk.
• 5.25 inch - able to hold up to 1.2 million bytes - this is an older type of disk that has now gone out of general use.

The letter C is reserved for the hard disk drive. This is permanently inside your computer and is where your applications and data are normally stored. If you have additional hard drives on your computer, they will be allocated letters from D onwards.

On a multimedia PC you will also have a CD-ROM drive for reading CDs. If you have only one hard drive then the CD-ROM drive will be given the letter D. Otherwise its drive letter will normally follow on from the last hard drive letter.

If your PC is connected to a network, you may have other drive letters allocated that refer to data storage areas on other computers on the network.

Folders are named areas on drives. A drive and its associated folders can be likened to a filing cabinet divided into different drawers.

You can also create folders within folders (or sub-folders). This is similar to the hanging files inside the filing cabinet drawers.

If you are familiar with other systems and previous versions of Windows, folders were called directories or subdirectories.

Folders contain documents and a document contains data. A document may be a word processing document containing text, a spreadsheet with numerical data or a program file containing the computer instructions used to run an application. The words document and file are usually interchangeable in Windows 98.

Each file must have a name. The name usually includes a file type, also known as the file extension. The name can be up to 256 characters long. The extension can be up to three characters long at the end of the name and separated by a dot.

A file extension indicates what type a file is and what application it is associated with. For example, a file with the extension .DOC is likely to be a document created using Microsoft Word. When you install a new application, its setup procedures automatically tell Windows 98 what file extensions it uses.

Other commonly used extensions are:

.XLS Microsoft Excel spreadsheet
. MDB Microsoft Access database
.TXT Simple text file
.WAV Sound file
.AVI Audio/video file
. BMP bitmap graphic file
. EXE program file
. DLL program file
. COM program file