

Chapter 12 USB Flash Drives



Despite the different brands and names you've heard for USB flash drives – JumpDrives™, Pocket drives™, Pen drives™, and Thumb drives™ – they all pretty much operate the same way. The difference is mostly in price, capacity, design, functions and features (for example, some have built-in MP3 players). What's really important, though, is what they share: They're all pluggable, portable, and powerful! . . . An plug into your USB port either on the back of your computer case or on the front. The newer cases usually have a USB port somewhere in the front often with a cover.

- USB flash drives weigh about the same as a car key – in fact, some USB flash drives are so lightweight that hypothetically it could take 14 ants to carry one!
- USB flash drives are about the size of a stick of gum.
- USB flash drives currently can hold up to two gigs of data – that's over 650 three-minute songs (33 hours) recorded as MP3s or about three times the content of a standard compact disc.
- If you share a computer, USB flash drives are a great way to store personal information – use them instead of the computer's hard drive.
- According to some manufacturer's specifications, USB flash drives can maintain data for 10 years – in that same period you'll probably have to replace your computer's hard drive three times.

Just plug your USB flash drive into the USB port of your computer or other USB-equipped device and drag the files you want to take with you into the folder that appears on your screen. Your files are instantly transferred to your USB flash drive. To transfer the items on your USB flash drive onto another computer, simply plug your USB flash drive into the computer that you want the files transferred to, open the folder that appears on your screen, and drag the desired files onto the computer's desktop.

USB ports are much more common than CD and especially DVD burners, so your USB flash drive will work with more computers than a CD-R or DVD-R. Also, the process of uploading files from your computer to a USB flash drive is much faster and simpler than burning a CD or DVD.

Additionally, USB flash drives act like portable hard drives to which you can add and delete files as many times as you like. With CD-Rs and DVD-Rs, you can only add data once, and you can't remove data once it's burned onto the disc.

USB flash drives are for everyone! Power users will appreciate the power and portability that USB flash drives provide, while tech novices will love how easily and intuitively USB flash drives allow you to share files. If you can turn on a computer and open a document, you can operate a USB flash drive!

If you often find yourself in need of a way to share information between computers, or want to secure your most precious computer data, USB flash drives are for you. With USB flash drives you can transport a PowerPoint file to your client's office for presentation, work on documents from home and then bring them back with you to work in the morning, bring thousands of digital photos across the country to share with your relatives, and much more.

USB flash drives are manufactured and sold by a number of different companies, including Lexar Media Inc., Kingston Technologies, SimpleTech Inc., PNY Technologies, and Viking InterWorks.

Most USB flash drives can be used without any installation process and any operating system. These are included in Windows ME, Windows 2000 and Windows XP. In order to operate under Windows 98 SE, a USB flash drive typically requires a driver that was not installed in Windows 98. A Windows 98 driver usually comes with the unit when purchased. If not, you can obtain it from the manufacturer of the USB flash drive, through their customer service support number or web site.

USB flash drives can be “hot swapped.” Any USB device can be inserted or extracted while the computer is on. This applies to USB flash drives as well. When you plug in the device your operating system will automatically recognize it as another drive and give it a drive letter.

I recommend that every CyberSmart member own a USB Flash Drive. . . and bring it to class with you as you would bring your books, notepads, etc. If there are any new files to give you from my computer it takes usually less than a minute to copy it to your flash drive and then you can transfer it to your computer.