

ONEDRIVE FILE DISAPPEARED?

Where to look and how to recover it

- IDENTIFY LOCATION
- CHECK ONLINE
- CLOUD RECYCLE BIN
- VERSION HISTORY
- ESCALATE WIDE DELETIONS
- RETENTION + BACKUP

DO NOT RELY ONLY ON THE WINDOWS RECYCLE BIN FOR CLOUD FILES

STEP 5 — CHECK THE SCALE

- ☐ Personal OneDrive
- ☐ OneDrive for Business
- ☐ SharePoint library
- ☐ Teams channel (stored in SharePoint)
- ☐ Teams chat (may be in sender's OneDrive)
- ☐ Local unsynchronised folder
- ☐ Network drive
- ☐ One file
- ☐ One folder
- ☐ One user
- ☐ One SharePoint site
- ☐ Multiple users affected
- ☐ Continuing deletions

STEP 6 — CONTAIN (IF SECURITY INCIDENT)

STEP 2 — CHECK ONLINE

- ☐ Open the location in a browser
- ☐ Search by filename, type or date
- ☐ Check whether the item was moved or renamed
- ☐ Check the original folder
- ☐ Pause unnecessary synchronisation if advised
- ☐ Isolate compromised devices
- ☐ Secure compromised accounts
- ☐ Preserve logs and evidence
- ☐ Stop restoring until cause is controlled

STEP 7 — RESTORE AND VERIFY

- ☐ OneDrive online Recycle Bin
- ☐ SharePoint first-stage Recycle Bin
- ☐ SharePoint second-stage Recycle Bin (admin)
- ☐ Windows Recycle Bin where relevant
- ☐ Do not empty any Recycle Bin
- ☐ Restore to the correct location
- ☐ Open the restored file
- ☐ Check content
- ☐ Check version
- ☐ Check permissions
- ☐ Check sharing links
- ☐

STEP 4 — OTHER RECOVERY OPTIONS

- ☐ Version history (file exists but wrong content)

STEP 8 — RECORD AND PREVENT

- ☐ Retention (compliance store — admin access needed)
- ☐ Departed-user recovery
- ☐ Microsoft 365 or third-party backup
- ☐ Endpoint or network backup
- ☐ Record what happened and who made the deletion
- ☐ Review permissions and delete rights
- ☐ Review alerts and monitoring
- ☐ Confirm backup scope
- ☐ Test restoration
- ☐ Update staff guidance

Recovery Locations: What Each One Covers

Recovery location	What it holds	Who can access	When to use it
Windows Recycle Bin	Files deleted from local Windows locations	The local computer user	Local file deletions; not the primary route for cloud files
OneDrive online Recycle Bin	Items deleted from OneDrive	OneDrive account owner	Most deleted OneDrive file recovery
SharePoint first-stage Recycle Bin	Deleted SharePoint items	Site members and owners (permissions vary)	SharePoint and Teams channel files
SharePoint second-stage Recycle Bin	Items removed from first stage	Authorised site collection administrators	Items no longer in first stage
Version history	Earlier saved states of an existing file	File owner and editors	File exists but content is wrong
OneDrive Restore	OneDrive rolled back to an earlier point	OneDrive account owner (or admin)	Widespread deletion, ransomware or mass corruption
Backup	Protected independent copies	Depends on backup solution and configuration	When Microsoft 365 recovery options are exhausted or insufficient

SYNCHRONISATION

- Keeps live data available across devices
- Propagates all changes, including deletions
- Deletion on one device synchronises everywhere
- Not a protected independent copy

BACKUP

- Maintains protected recovery points
- Point-in-time restore
- Independent from live synchronisation
- Requires separate configuration and testing

Remember

If a synchronised cloud file disappears, check the online Microsoft 365 Recycle Bin first. The OneDrive sync client may no longer place an additional local copy of a cloud-deleted file in the Windows Recycle Bin. Act quickly — recovery windows expire.

Sync copies the change. Backup preserves a recoverable state. A synchronised file is part of the live data set, not a separate protected copy.

