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How to Zip and Unzip Files on Mac?

Our Friends · Tuesday, May 12th, 2026

Managing files on macOS is usually simple, but tasks like sending multiple files or sharing large archives can quickly become inconvenient. In this article, we'll show how to zip and unzip files on a Mac in a simple way.

What might happen if you decide to share all essential items in bulk? This move can instantly earn you sideways glances from colleagues or clog up the messenger cache. In this article, we'll explore how to properly **zip and unzip files on Mac** without jumping through hoops.

A Top Choice for File Management

If you need more control, try **Commander One on the App Store**, which helps manage large files and archives more efficiently. It is a file manager that offers a dual-pane interface, which can make it easier to work with multiple folders and files at the same time.

It is also useful when handling large files or archives, as it allows you to manage and browse compressed files more comfortably than the default tools in macOS.

For users, the Commander One App is a 2-in-1 tool. It is both a visual treat and a go-to solution for heavy-duty file management.

Zip It the Mac Way

Most users don't even realize that their system is equipped with a robust tool, Archive Utility. It works silently, with no full-fledged window to click on.

Imagine that your desktop looks like a mess of random PDF files. To turn them into a neat little block, a few steps are for you to follow:

- Select the objects. If they're scattered, hold down the Command (?) key and click them one by one.
- Right-click (or tap with two fingers on the touchpad).
- Select "Compress."

Note: If you're compressing a single file, the archive will be named correspondingly. If you're compressing multiple files, the resulting file is an Archive.zip.

How to Unzip

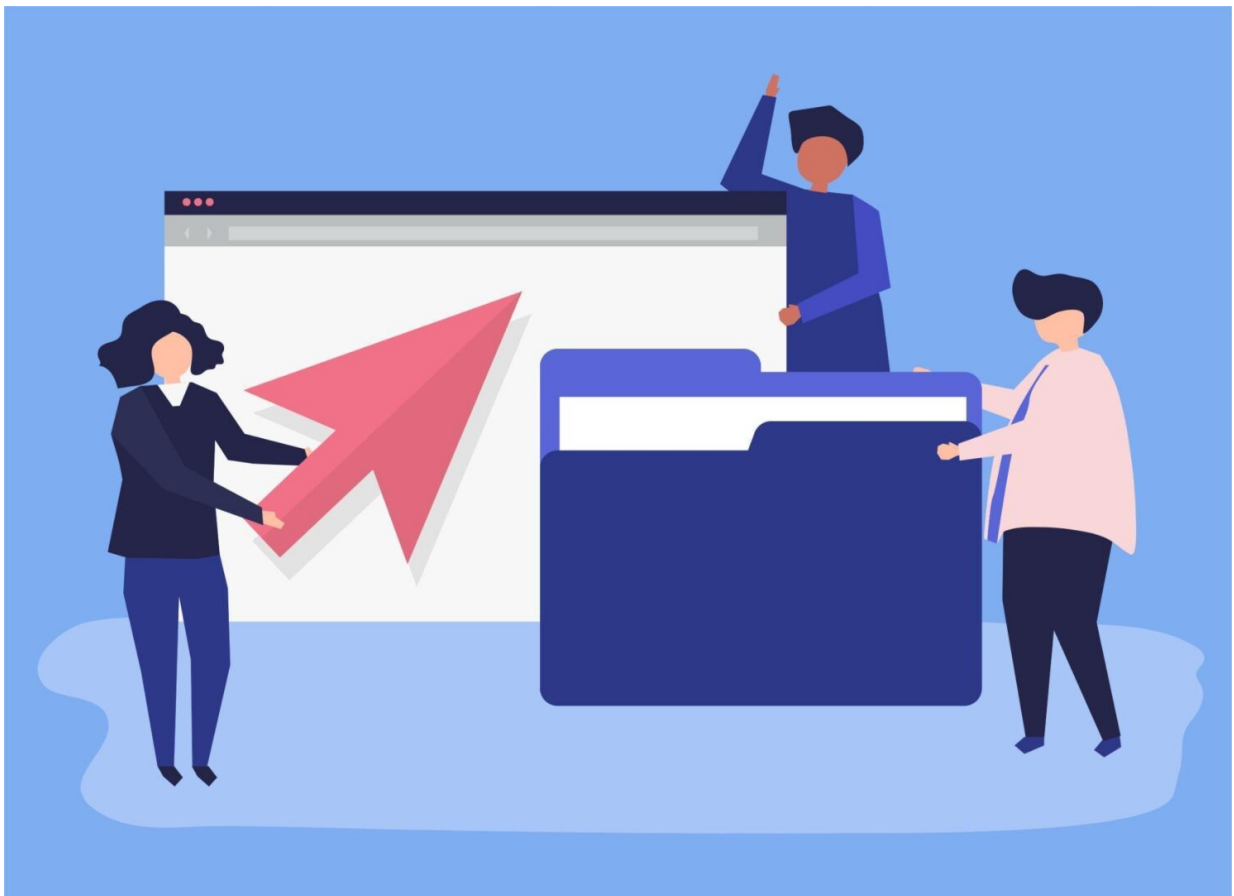
Apple doesn't make you think twice. See a ZIP archive? Just double-click it. The system will instantaneously spit the contents into the same folder as the archive.

On the other hand, if you wish to move your files to the Trash right away after unzipping to keep storage free, you can configure this in the utility's settings.

Why Do Windows Users Grumble?

This is where reality bites. You've thoroughly packed a project, sent it to a friend on their PC, and they respond, "Hey, what are those weird __MACOSX folders and.DS_Store files inside the folder?"

The thing is, macOS is built with safety in mind. It creates hidden files to remember where icons were, what the background was, and how you sorted files. Mac users won't see them, but on Windows, they show up as junk.



If you are eager to win an impeccable professional reputation, turn to third-party utilities. The most widespread one is Keka. It's lightning-fast, featuring a magic "Exclude Mac resources" checkbox.

What you need to do is simply drag a folder onto the Keka icon, and the resulting archive is "sterile" and won't raise any issues from your Windows colleagues.

When ZIP Won't Open

You may occasionally receive files from the internet with .rar, .7z, or multi-volume archives, where a single file is split into parts. The standard program will simply treat them with suspicion and return an error.

In such cases, The Unarchiver will surely save the day. It's a free app from the App Store that everyone should keep in their software collection.

It works the same way: double-click to unzip, but as a bonus, it supports about 10 times as many formats as the built-in utility. If The Unarchiver doesn't open a file, it's rotten to the core.

Live Tips and Tricks

1. Don't zip videos and photos (JPEG). There is almost no point in doing so. These formats are known to be maximally compressed. You'll waste processor time, but the file size will decrease by 0.5%.
2. Rename them asap. This is a nightmare when a "Downloads" folder contains five files named Archive.zip. After creating an archive, immediately rename it Project_Mamba_2026.
3. Apply Quick Look. If the contents of the archive remain unknown, select it and press the space bar. Some third-party plugins let you take a glimpse inside a ZIP file without unzipping it.
4. Delete originals wisely. If you zipped a 5GB folder, you're now using 10GB (original + archive). If everything went smoothly, delete the original to avoid accumulating junk.

Summary

Being able to zip and unzip files on a Mac is the bare minimum of user hygiene. Built-in functionality will suffice for 95% of tasks: select, compress, and send.

The main thing to keep in mind: tidy files mean tidy minds. Archives help maintain this order, preventing your Mac from turning into a warehouse of abandoned documents.

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