Locate Thunderbird Profile Folder

This article is about Thunderbird's profile folder.

Thunderbird stores all personal information such as messages, address books and configuration settings in a folder called the profile. A profile can have one or more accounts. Thunderbird doesn't delete a profile when uninstalling, upgrading or re-installing but to avoid any risk of accidentally deleting it as a side effect it is stored in a directory outside of your program directory.

The first time you start Thunderbird it will automatically create a profile in a default location if it does not already exist. You can also use the Profile Manager to create a profile wherever you want (don't create it in the Thunderbird program directory) or to delete or rename one.

Thunderbird doesn't let you switch profiles without exiting, unlike Outlook Expresses identities. However, the profile switcher extension will let you do that.

Finding your profile

Profile folders default to a standard location but are named randomly for additional security. Or you can set a custom location using Other methods of finding a profile below.

The installation directory includes a folder named "profile" (for example, *C:\Program Files\Mozilla Thunderbird\defaults\profile* on Windows), but this folder contains program defaults, not your user profile data. On Windows 2000/XP/Vista and on Linux, the folder containing your user profile data is hidden by default and you will need to show hidden files and folders to navigate to the profile folder.

Windows 95, 98, and ME
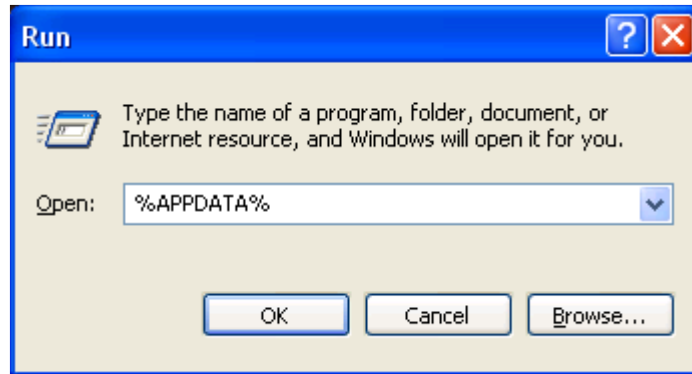
Profile folders are in one of these locations:

> *C:\Windows\Application Data\Thunderbird\Profiles\<Profile name>*
> *C:\Windows\Profiles\<Windows user name>\Application Data\Thunderbird\Profiles\<Profile name>\ .*

Windows 2000 and XP

1. Choose Start → Run
2. Type in *%APPDATA%*
3. Press OK. A Windows Explorer window will appear.
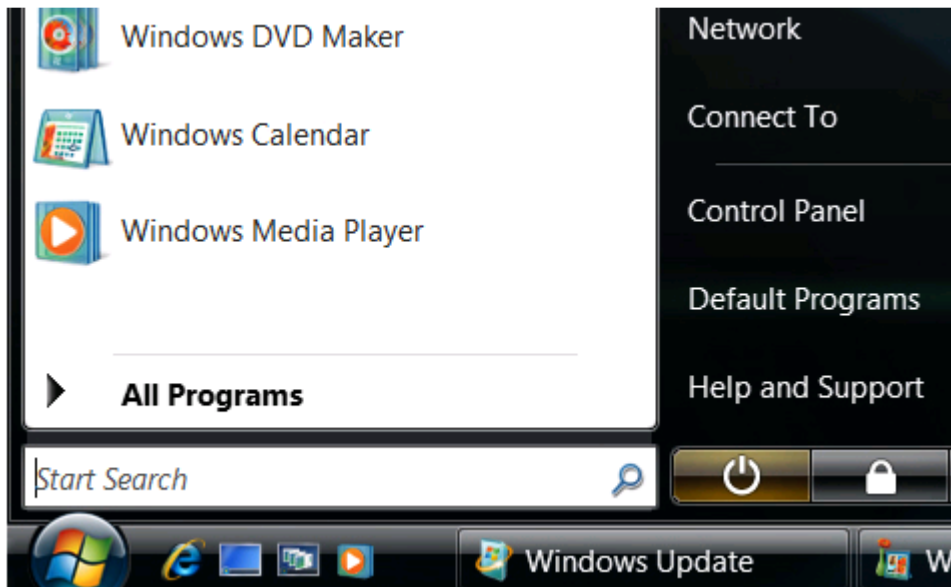
4. In the Windows Explorer window, choose

Thunderbird → Profiles. Each folder in this folder is a profile on your computer.

You can also navigate directly to your profile folder at the following path:

C:\Documents and Settings\<Windows user name>\Application Data\Thunderbird\Profiles\<Profile name>

The Application Data folder is a hidden folder; to show hidden folders, open Windows Explorer and choose "Tools → Folder Options → View (tab) → Show hidden files and folders".

Windows Vista

1. Open the Windows Start menu
2. In the the "Start Search" box, type in *%APPDATA%* [1]
3. Click the "Roaming" item that appears on the menu.
4. In the Windows Explorer window that opens, choose Thunderbird → Profiles. Each folder in this folder is a profile on your computer.

You can also navigate directly to your profile folder at the following path:

C:\Users\<Windows user name>\AppData\Roaming\Thunderbird\Profiles\<Profile name>

The AppData folder is folder is a hidden folder; to show hidden folders, open a Windows Explorer window and choose "Organize → Folder and Search Options → Folder Options → View (tab) → Show hidden files and folders".

Linux and Unix

Profile folders are located here:

~/.thunderbird/<Profile name>/

However, if you're using a third party build from Debian or Ubuntu, those builds store your profile folder here:

~/.mozilla-thunderbird<Profile name>.

Both are hidden folders. See this article for more information. To show hidden files in Nautilus (Gnome desktop's default file browser), choose "View -> Show Hidden Files".

Mac OS X

Profile folders are in one of these locations:

~/Library/Thunderbird/Profiles/<Profile name>/

~/Library/Application Support/Thunderbird/Profiles/<Profile name>/

The tilde character (~) refers to the current user's Home folder, so *~/Library* is the */Macintosh HD/Users/<username>/Library* folder.

Other methods of finding a profile

Searching for a file

Every Thunderbird (or SeaMonkey) profile will have an "abook.mab" file, even if you've configured it to store messages outside of the profile. You could find a profile by doing a file search for that file. However, you need to include hidden files and folders in the search:

Windows 2000: In Windows Explorer (or My Computer) choose Tools → Folder Options → View (tab) → Show hidden files and folders

Windows XP: Click "Start → Search". In the Search Results window, scroll down and click "More advanced options". Check the boxes, "Search system folders", "Search hidden files and folders" and "Search subfolders"

Windows Vista: From the Windows Start menu, click "Search". In the "Advanced Search" area, select "Include non-indexed, hidden, and system files (might be slow)"

Using the Error Console

You can also use Thunderbird to find the location of whatever profile it is using. In Thunderbird, go to "Tools -> Error Console" and then copy and paste the following code in the field near the top of the Error Console and click on the Evaluate button. It is one very long line ending in *path* — make sure that you get all of it:

```
Components.classes
["@mozilla.org/file/directory_service;1"].getService
```

```
( Components.interfaces.nsIProperties).get
("ProfD", Components.interfaces.nsIFile).path
```

The console should display the location of the profile that is currently in use. If you don't see it, select "All" in the toolbar.

Profiles.ini

Thunderbird uses the profiles.ini file to find the location of your profiles, and to determine which profile is the default profile. If you're using Windows the file is located in the parent of the "Profiles" folder. It can be edited to move your profile. If it's deleted, a new profiles.ini file will be created and a new default profile folder created when Thunderbird starts.

This file is the reason why you can't just copy a profile into the "profiles" folder and have Thunderbird discover it.

Files and folders in the profile

Folders

Name	Description
Attachments	Used when attachments aren't stored in the folder or the desktop.
calendar-data	Used by the Lightning extension.
Cache	Used by the optional disk cache added in Thunderbird 3.0
chrome	Its mainly used for the optional userChrome.css and userContent.css files.
extensions	Installed extensions and themes.
ImapMail	Mail from IMAP accounts.
Mail	Mail from POP accounts and Local Folders (Global Inbox)
minidumps	Dump files (*.dmp) created by the crash reporter
News	News from newsgroups
OfflineCache	
Personas	Used by the Personas add-on. It requires Thunderbird 3.0 or later
WebmailData	Used by the Webmail extension.

All of the messages for an account are stored in a subdirectory named after the mail server. For example if you have a Gmail POP account it would create a pop.gmail.com subdirectory in Mail. Your messages would be stored in text files with the folders name and no file extension called mbox files. For example, the inbox folder would be called "Inbox.". There would also be a inbox.msf file (a index file, it doesn't have any messages) and there might be a inbox.sbd subdirectory. The .sbd subdirectories are used to store the folders in a hierarchy, there is no master list describing how the folders should be organized.

If you use a add-on to make a webmail account emulate a POP account the mail server is typically 127.0.0.1 (or localhost). If you have more than one account with the same mail server Thunderbird adds a suffix. So your second yahoo webmail account might be stored in 127.0.0.1-1. The same thing occurs if you have multiple accounts with the same POP or IMAP servers, though thats less common.

Files

None of these files should be read-only. If they are that might be a side effect of dragging and dropping or backing up files to removable media, and then using them to restore your profile.

See Files and folders in the profile - Thunderbird for a more complete list.

Name	Description
abook.mab	Personal Address Book
cert8.db	Security certificates
cookies.txt	Cookies RSS_cookies_(Thunderbird)
downloads.rdf	Download history. Can be deleted to resolve slow downloads or program hangs (Bug 159107)
extensions.rdf	Installed extension information. It can be deleted to remove "ghost" entries from the extension list [2] and to resolve various other issues.
history.mab	Collected addresses
key3.db	Key database
localstore.rdf	Toolbar and window layout size/position settings. It can be deleted to resolve various issues.
mailviews.dat	Defines your current message view (you can customize it)
mimeTypes.rdf	Action to perform when downloading certain types of files. Can be deleted to reset download actions.
msgFilterRules.dat in ImapMail, Mail, News	Message filters
panacea.dat	Mail folder cache. Deleting it sometimes helps get rid of Phantom folders
popstate.dat in Mail	Keeps track of which messages have been downloaded and left on the POP3 server
prefs.js	All preferences. See: Modify Thunderbird settings
secmod.db	Security module database
signons.txt	Encrypted saved passwords, requires key3.db to work . The signon.SignonFileName setting specifies this file.
training.dat	Custom training for Junk Mail Controls
user.js (does not exist by default)	User-set overriding preferences

Files without specific names

Name	Description
*. in ImapMail, Mail, and News	Mbox files. They are text files that contain all of the messages for that folder.
*.mab other than abook.mab and history.mab	User-created or imported address books.
*.msf in ImapMail, Mail, and News	Index files for mail messages. Playback information for offline operations and incomplete online operations.

Portable Thunderbird

Portable Thunderbird   is a popular third party build of Thunderbird that is installed on a USB drive along with the profile. Its designed for roaming users. The profile is not specified by a profiles.ini file on the boot disk, its always in a Data\profile directory within the programs directory. It can have only one profile and doesn't support the profile manager.

The profile has the same layout and files as Thunderbird.

Miscellaneous information

The channel-prefs.js file in the defaults\pref directory in the Thunderbird program directory specifies what update channel you are using. That determines what type of builds auto-update looks for. app.update.channel is normally set to "release". If you installed a beta that would set it to "beta". If you want to stop getting beta and release candidate updates change it to "release".

The application.ini file was added to the Thunderbird program directory with Thunderbird 3.0. Its mainly used to control whether the migration assistant , crash reporter and extension manager are enabled.

The mailviews.dat file in the defaults\messenger directory in the Thunderbird program directory specifies the default custom views. Views are selected using the View list box in the toolbar. You can add it to the toolbar by right clicking on the toolbar, selecting customize, dragging and dropping the View control to the toolbar and pressing the Done button.

Icons are normally available both as a resource within Thunderbird and at chrome/icons/default/messengerWindow.ico in the program directory. If you don't like the icon in the current version you could copy that file from an older version and modify the shortcut to point to it.