

Emergency Excel File Recovery Checklist

When an Excel file becomes corrupted, every action you take matters. Follow this structured checklist step by step to avoid permanent data loss, maximize recovery success, and prevent making the damage worse.

1. Before You Do Anything

- Stop trying to open the corrupted file repeatedly
- Check the file size (if 0 KB, recovery may not be possible)
- Create a copy of the corrupted file immediately
- Disconnect the device from the network if malware is suspected

2. Prepare for Recovery

- Close Microsoft Excel completely
- Close all background applications
- Run CHKDSK if you suspect disk errors
- Make sure you have enough free disk space for recovery

3. Choose the Right Tool

- Download the free trial from the official website only
- Preview recoverable data before purchasing
- If macros are involved, confirm .xlsm support
- If the file is severely damaged, enable deep/advanced scan mode

4. Run the Repair Process

- Select the copied corrupted file (never the original)
- Start the deep scan and do NOT interrupt it
- Review formulas, charts, pivot tables in preview mode
- Confirm formatting appears intact

5. Save Properly

- Save the repaired file to a different physical drive
- Save macro-enabled files as .xlsm
- Do NOT overwrite the original corrupted file

6. After Recovery

- Open and test all sheets

- Check pivot tables and linked data sources
- Back up the repaired file immediately
- Enable AutoSave or version history

7. **Prevent Future Disasters**

- Use the 3-2-1 backup rule (3 copies, 2 locations, 1 offsite)
- Turn on OneDrive or Google Drive version history
- Schedule automatic backups