

Excel File Recovery

Action Checklist

Use this step-by-step plan to recover your workbook safely and avoid making the situation worse.

Step 1: Stop Making It Worse

- Close Excel immediately.
- Do not save over the corrupted file.
- Do not install random recovery tools.
- If the file was deleted, stop using that drive.

Step 2: Try Built-In Excel Recovery First

- Open Excel → File → Open → Browse → Open and Repair
- Check Recover Unsaved Workbooks
- Review OneDrive or SharePoint Version History
- Check temporary files and AutoRecover folder

If the file restores correctly — stop here.

Step 3: Test Safe Free Options (Low Risk Only)

- Check Recycle Bin
- Use File History (Windows)
- Restore from cloud backup
- Use trusted undelete tools (on a copy of the drive if possible)

If formulas, sheets, or formatting are missing — escalate.

Step 4: Use Professional Desktop Recovery Software

- Choose preview-first software
- Scan in read-only mode

- Export results to a new file
- Compare recovered data before replacing anything
- Keep logs/screenshots for documentation

Never overwrite the original workbook.

Step 5: If Using Online Recovery

- Remove sensitive data first
- Read privacy + deletion policies
- Prefer browser-based processing
- Open recovered files offline first
- Delete test uploads after completion

If the workbook contains payroll, PII, or client data — avoid online tools.

Step 6: After Recovery — Prevent the Next Crisis

- Turn on AutoSave + AutoRecover (5–10 min interval)
- Use versioned cloud storage
- Follow 3-2-1 backup strategy
- Test restore once per month