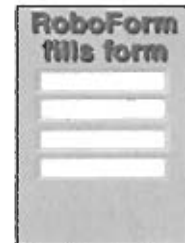


What is the Tilde (~) file that appears on Desktop

What is this ~ file?

The file appearing on your desktop with the filename ~, commonly known as a tilde, is a backup of your Windows Address Book. It is appearing as a result of the April 2003 [Cumulative Patch for Outlook Express \(330994\)](#). The patch is installed for Outlook Express 5.5 or 6 in response to a vulnerability that could allow an attacker to run code of the attacker's choice on a user's machine. To exploit the vulnerability, an attacker would have to be able to cause Windows to open a specially constructed MHTML URL, either on a web site or included in an HTML email message.

Unfortunately, there is a bug in the patch. Whenever you make a change in your Windows Address Book file (*.wab file), Windows makes a backup of this file. Generally this backup is called username.wa~, however after the patch is installed the backup gets renamed to just ~ instead and saved in the directory where you start your Outlook Express. Most of the time, people start Outlook Express from a shortcut on their desktop, so the backup file gets placed there. This is how the tilde (~) file arrives on your desktop.



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Is the File a Virus and will Spyware or Anti-virus Utilities Find it?

Because the file is simply a backup of your Windows Address Book, spyware searching utilities or anti-virus products won't flag it as anything suspicious.

Can I Delete the ~ File?

The simple answer is yes, the file can be deleted. However if it is deleted, you won't have a backup of your Windows Address Book if a virus or something else corrupts it or you accidentally delete the information in the address book. So I wouldn't necessarily delete the file without backing it up first. Personally, here are the steps I would take to remain safe in case you need the file again.

1. Right click on the file and choose Rename
2. Type in a name for the file and add the .wab extension to it
For Example, you might want to rename it to addressbook.wab or something similar
3. Now, put a blank, formatted floppy disk in your floppy drive and right-click on the newly named file
4. Choose **Send To, Floppy Drive** (most likely A)
5. Now the file is backed up in case of emergency, right-click on the file on your desktop and choose Delete

Each time you make a change to your address book, this file will reappear so it's a good idea to keep that floppy drive around and make a backup each time you make changes. This protects you from losing valuable email addresses in case of a disaster.

An alternative to this would be to change the Start in option for Outlook Express. This has been suggested by a few visitors and works well.

- Find the shortcut to Outlook Express and right-click on it
- Click on Properties
- Make sure Read-only is unchecked on the General tab
- Click on the Shortcut tab
- In the "Start In" field, change it to an alternative path where the tilde file will appear, for example C:\
- Click on Apply

Is There a Patch to fix this?

Although Microsoft has indicated that it knows about this problem and intends to make a patch available, they have not released one yet, as of July 2003.