(Approx. 579 words)

Apps You Run on Your Computer Are “.exe” files

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Your device (Windows or Apple computer, iPhone, iPad, or whatever) runs “apps,” which is a term short for “applications”. An app is a program or a set of instructions for the computer to execute or “run.” They are why you have your device. Although apps can run on any device, to keep it simple, let’s look at how an “app” runs on a Windows computer (almost the same on any device).

When you purchase your device (Windows computer), it comes with many apps that have already been installed and are ready to go. Some very helpful apps with Windows are WordPad, Paint, Calculator, and many others, such as some games, utility apps, and more. You are probably unaware of all the apps that come with Windows that have already been installed. If you want an app you do not have, like a game, Microsoft Word, or Firefox, you must DOWNLOAD and INSTALL it on your device. You are downloading and installing an EXECUTABLE computer file; that is, it can “run” on your device. This file type has a name that ends with “.exe,” meaning “executable.”

You are probably already aware of a “file” on your Windows computer. A file can be a text document, a photo, or a spreadsheet. If you wanted to create or write a new app from scratch, you would write the app using computer language and write it in a file, too. But what you are doing by writing an app is you are giving commands or instructions for the computer to follow. Suppose you were writing a game app to play tic-tac-toe on your computer; you would have to write instructions for the computer to recognize where each X or O is on the grid and where to place the next move. So this app is written as a file just like any other file except the name of this kind of file ends with “.exe.” If you have downloaded (that is, copied a file from somewhere else, like a website, for example), you probably have noticed that the name of the file you downloaded ends with “.exe.” In Windows, one way to run such a file is to click your mouse on the file name – your computer sees it as an executable file and runs it.

It is the same if you double-click an app icon on your desktop; you tell the computer to run that app.

Maybe you get notices that there is an update to an app you already have. If you download the update, it is an executable file (a “.exe” file) that you click on to run the update.

Exe files are not for you to open and look at or change. They are in computer or machine” language that you would not be able to understand. But they ARE just files stored on your computer in a program or apps folder. To remove an app from your device, you must UNINSTALL it using a Windows or other utility app to do that. Please do NOT attempt to find the executable file yourself and delete it.

If you want to learn more about executable files or apps, ask Google and watch a short video or two about it. But most of us want the app to run so we can use our device how we want.