Mac OS X 10.4: Where does Spotlight search?

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Products Affected
Mac OS X 10.4

Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger features Spotlight, a lightning-fast search technology that instantly lets you find things on your Mac. By default, Spotlight will index and search in the following locations:

- All Home folders (local and network-based, as well as FileVault and non-FileVault). This includes:
    - The Documents, Movies, Music, and Pictures folders
    - The Trash of all users and each mounted volume.
    - ~/Library/Metadata/
    - ~/Library/Caches/Metadata/
    - ~/Library/Mail/
    - ~/Library/Caches/com.apple.AddressBook/Metadata/
    - ~/Library/PreferencePanes/

- Spotlight also searches these non-Home folder locations by default:
    - /Library/PreferencePanes/
    - /System/Library/PreferencePanes/
    - /Applications

Can Spotlight search anywhere else? Of course! Any new folder you create in your Home automatically gets indexed so that it's searchable. If you connect an external storage device, such as a USB or FireWire hard drive, Spotlight will index the stuff on it, too. (If you want to exclude certain areas from Spotlight searching, see the tip below.)

Note: If your computer has multiple user accounts, any files that reside at the top level of each user's Home folder will also be indexed and searchable by Spotlight, even though they cannot be modified. However, all files and folders located within a user's Desktop, Documents, Library, Music, Movies, and Pictures folders will not be indexed nor can they be searched by other user accounts using Spotlight.

Tip: You can use Spotlight preferences to tell Spotlight which locations not to search, if you wish.

Still need help? Speak to an Apple Expert
Arrange a phone call with one of our Apple Experts who specializes in your exact question. Talk to us now or later at your convenience. We'll even call you.
Get started
*NOTE: Callbacks are currently only available for **U.S. and Canada** phone numbers.*