



BSM Connection™ Online Library Software Tips – *Internet*

What Are .DAT Files and How Do You Open Them?

Someone sent you an email with an attachment that looks totally foreign. The extension reads .DAT. What is that, and how can you open the file?

.DAT files are documents that aren't associated with any one program or application. For reasons unknown, some email programs automatically change the file extension on email attachments to .DAT. Common extensions that are recognizable are:

- .doc – Microsoft Word Files
- .xls – Microsoft Excel Files
- .ppt – Microsoft PowerPoint Files
- JPG, GIF, PNG – Images

So how do you open a .DAT file? The easiest way is to contact the sender and ask them the type of document that was sent. You can then right click on the attachment contained within your email, and choose Save As. For convenience, save the document to your desktop, right click on the document, and from the context menu, choose Rename. Rename the document using the file name, including the extension (i.e., DocumentName.doc – if it's a Microsoft Word document). Once you've identified the correct extension, the .DAT icon will automatically change to the appropriate icon for that file type, i.e., Excel, Word, etc.

If you're unable to contact the sender, experiment by renaming the document using the more commonly used document extensions, such as the ones listed above. If all else fails, you will have to ask the sender to try and resend the document to you.