

Torrent - what it is, how it works, and safe, legal use tips

Gridinsoft Help Center

What it is

A torrent is a tiny descriptor file (with a .torrent extension) that tells a BitTorrent app where to find pieces of a larger download across many peers. Modern clients can also use magnet links, which skip the file and include the info directly in the link. Torrents don't host the content themselves—they're just the map.

Why it matters

Torrents make big downloads faster and more reliable by sharing pieces between many people. But they can also expose your IP to strangers and are a common way malware spreads through fake or tampered files.

How it works - quick tour

- Open: you open a .torrent or magnet link in a BitTorrent client.
- Find: the client discovers peers (trackers/DHT) that have pieces of the file.
- Swap: you download pieces from some peers while uploading to others.
- Finish: when all pieces arrive and verify, the file is complete.

Red flags

- Torrents claiming "cracked" apps or new movies from unknown uploaders.
- Files inside with double extensions (e.g., movie.mp4.exe) or odd installers.
- Pop-up sites pushing extra downloads or "codec updates."
- Legal notices from your ISP about sharing copyrighted content.

Do it right

- Stick to legal torrents (open-source software, public-domain media); follow local laws.
- Check comments, uploader reputation, and file lists before downloading.
- Scan downloads with reputable security software before opening.
- Avoid running executables from torrents; prefer well-known formats like .mp4, .flac, .zip from trusted sources.
- Consider your privacy: your IP is visible to peers while torrenting.