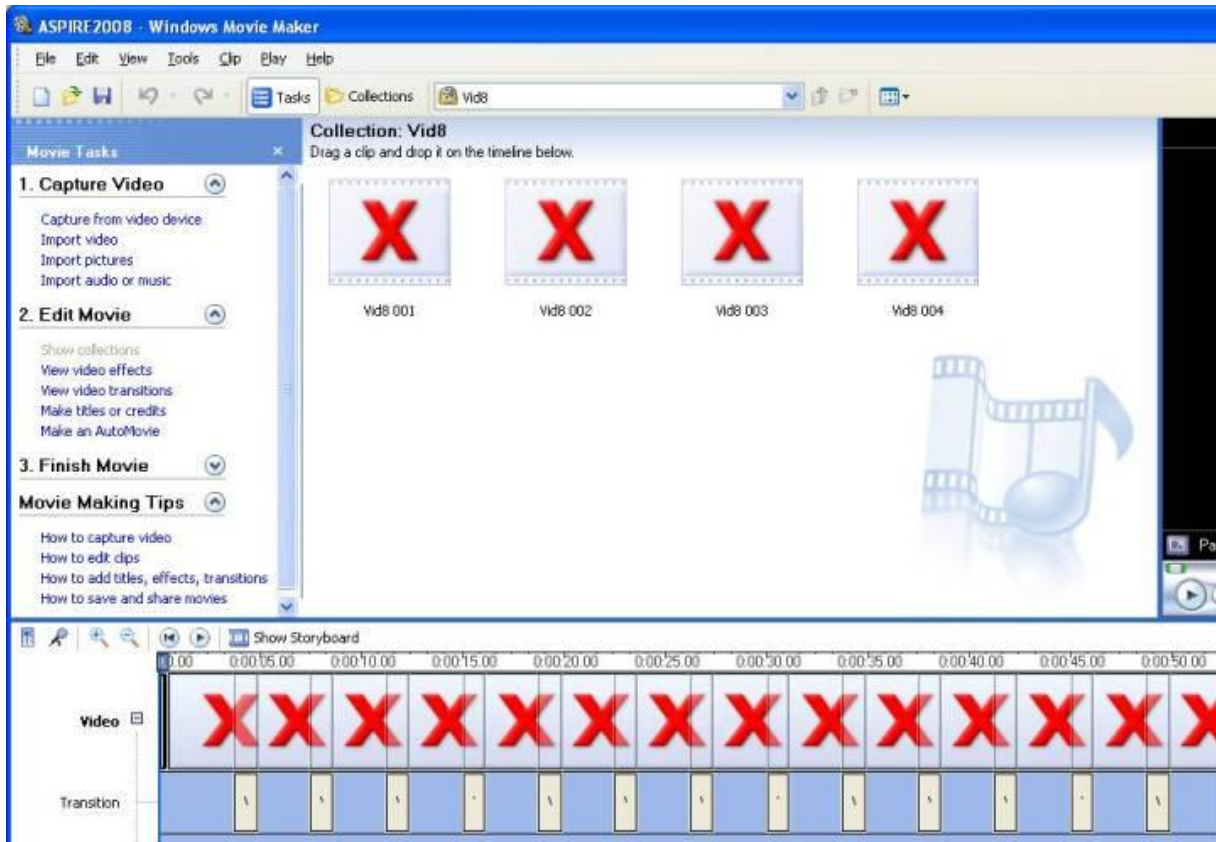


Get the Red X out of your Movie Maker projects

Every student new to Movie Maker (and even some veteran users) will no doubt have the unpleasant and alarming experience of seeing the Red X when opening their project after the first draft.

If you haven't yet experienced it, here's what it looks like:



This happens when Movie Maker can't locate a file in the collection folder or the timeline—a video clip, music file, narration, or still photo.

The inherent problem with the Movie Maker software is that it seems to assume that every user is working on a personal home computer or laptop start-to-finish and therefore Movie Maker automatically saves pieces of your project in a location on the harddrive of the computer you are working on. Since with school projects you are likely to move from one computer to the next, sometimes between home and school over subsequent periods and days, it is important that you organize and track your files differently and take all of the parts with you that Movie Maker must make reference to.

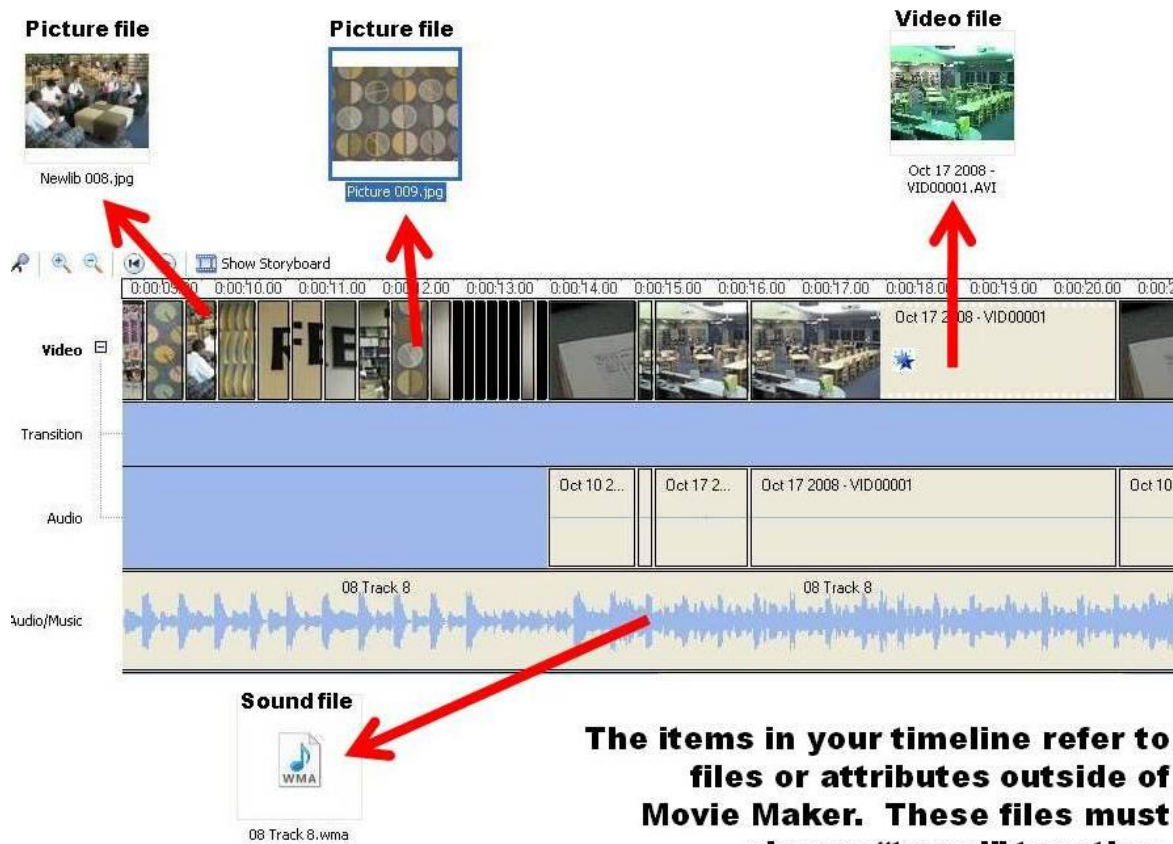
Because Movie Maker won't publish a final movie if it contains any Red X's (that is to say, any missing parts, attributes, or files), you must monitor the location of your files carefully.

Why does the Red X happen?

Unlike other software you may be familiar with (pictures in a word processing document, brief sound effects and graphics in Powerpoint), Movie Maker projects do not actually import external files and integrate them into the project itself. In other words, Movie Maker project files are not self-contained or autonomous. Rather, the project file with the timeline that you edit “points” to the attributes it needs (video clips, sound files, pictures, etc.) that are stored elsewhere on the computer and contribute to the entire project. It creates a path to these files and loads them in the project view. The default (automatic) place that Movie Maker saves these attributes to is the My Documents folder on the C: Drive. If you move your project to another computer, these files which automatically are saved to My Documents must come with you. If they don't, you get the Red X.

Or, here's another scenario-- if you meticulously save all your files to a USB flash in port location E:, for example, and then subsequently plug your flash in on the next computer you use in USB port F:, Movie Maker will be potentially confused, since it will have mapped the files/attributes as being found in E: and that will be the address it uses to find them.

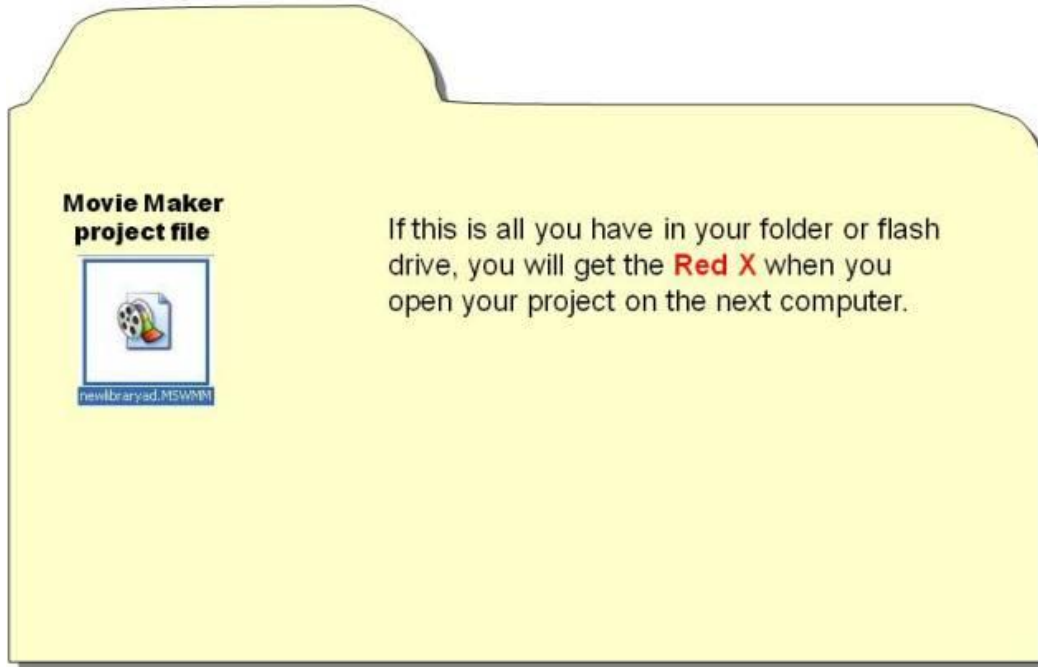
Here is a diagram of how a Movie Maker project is structured, and the files it refers to, but does not integrate. If it can't find the files, the Red X will appear on the timeline:



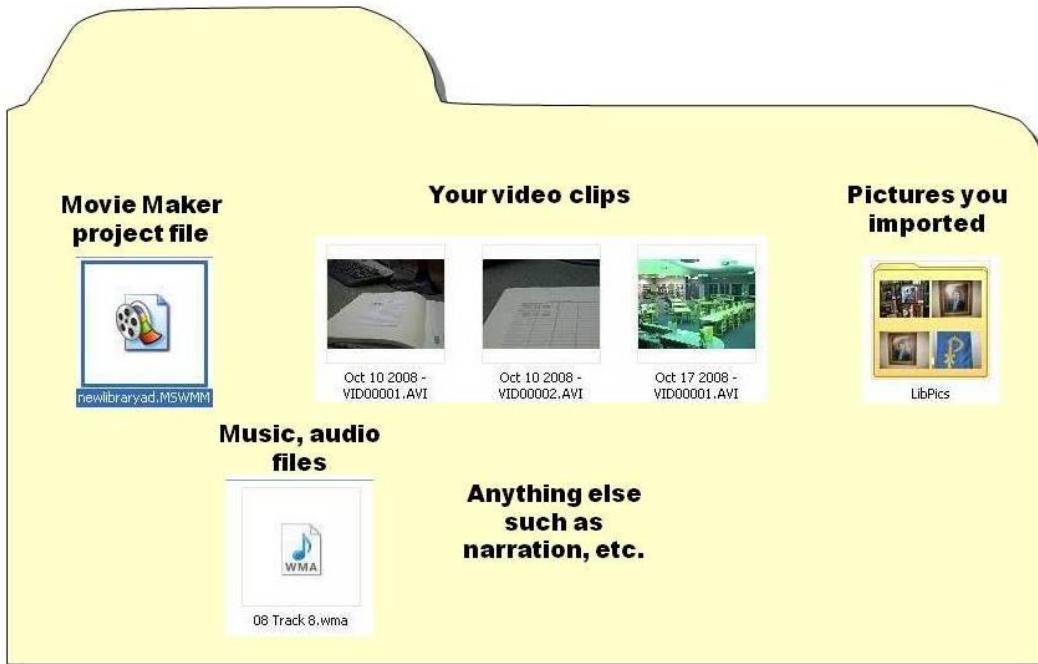
The items in your timeline refer to files or attributes outside of Movie Maker. These files must always “travel” together.

How can I avoid the Red X?

An easy way to avoid the Red X is to immediately create a personalized folder on the desktop or h: drive or flash drive before you start importing video and begin editing. Save your captured video to this location and save your Movie Maker project here too. Make sure any audio files you rip, narration you record, or pictures you import are also saved to this personalized folder location.



The file below contains all of the files/attributes that your project needs together.



If I see the Red X, is there a way to get rid of it?

If you can “tell” Movie Maker where the missing media file/attribute is, you can reconnect to it, and get rid of the Red X. Using your mouse right click on the Red X in the timeline and choose “Browse for missing file”.



Then, navigate to the location of the missing file and double-click on it. Movie Maker should refresh your project, replacing the Red X with the desired file.

If you don't know where the missing file is, Movie Maker can help. When you select “Browse for missing file” Movie Maker will tell you the location where it expected to find the file. If it's a location that still holds the file, go retrieve it. (If it's on the C: drive of a security-protected school computer, it will have been erased). If it's looking for a flash drive, it will likely map it with an address starting with E: or F:.

If the missing file is on another drive, go copy it and put it in your project file and reconnect with “Browse for missing file.”

Once you publish your final movie, all files and attributes are merged and the Red X is no longer an issue!