



# Family Vault

*Built by a grandad, for families.*

<https://fmmvault.co.uk>

## User Guide

Version 1.0 — Personal Edition

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## 1. What is FamilyVault?

FamilyVault is a desktop application for organising, tagging, and archiving your family photo collection. It uses face recognition to automatically identify family members in your photos — all running privately on your own computer, with no internet connection required and no data ever leaving your machine.

FamilyVault works alongside your existing photo archive. It does not change your original files. Instead, it builds its own database alongside your photos — recording who is in each one, when it was taken, and where.

### Key facts

- Works with NEF, JPG, JPEG, PNG, TIFF, HEIC, DNG and more
- Face recognition runs entirely on your computer — no cloud
- Original photo files are never modified
- Compatible with Windows and Linux
- Designed for everyday family use — no technical knowledge needed

## 2. Minimum Requirements

<b>Operating System</b>	Windows 10/11 or Linux (Fedora, Ubuntu, Mint)
<b>RAM</b>	8 GB minimum — 16 GB or more recommended for large archives
<b>Storage</b>	Your photo archive plus ~500 MB for the FamilyVault database
<b>Processor</b>	Any modern CPU — faster CPU means faster face scanning
<b>Display</b>	1280 x 768 minimum screen resolution
<b>Photo formats</b>	NEF, JPG, JPEG, PNG, TIFF, HEIC, HEIF, DNG

## 3. Installation

### Windows

1. Download **FamilyVault-Setup.exe** from <https://fmmvault.co.uk>
2. Double-click the installer and follow the on-screen steps
3. FamilyVault will be installed to C:\Program Files\FamilyVault with a Desktop shortcut
4. Enter your licence key when prompted and click Activate

*Tip — Windows may show a SmartScreen warning the first time. Click More info then Run anyway — this is normal for new software.*

### Linux

1. Download the FamilyVault zip file from <https://fmmvault.co.uk>
2. Extract the zip and open a terminal in the extracted folder
3. Run: `python3 familyvault.py`
4. Enter your licence key when prompted and click Activate

## 4. First Launch — Getting Started

When you first open FamilyVault you will see the Dashboard tab. Before you can search or tag photos, you need to do two things:

### Step 1 — Point FamilyVault at your photo archive

Go to the Import tab. In the Archive field, click Browse and navigate to the root folder of your photo collection — for example D:\Photos. This is where FamilyVault will look for your existing photos.

## Step 2 — Enrol your family members

Go to the Enrol tab. This is where you teach FamilyVault to recognise each person in your family. You only need to do this once per person.

*Tip — Enrolment quality matters — For best results, enrol each person using 5 or more clear photos. Avoid sunglasses, masks, or very small faces.*

## 5. The Tabs — Quick Overview

Tab	Purpose
Dashboard	Summary of your archive — total photos, people tagged, recent activity
Enrol	Teach FamilyVault to recognise a new family member
Review	Check and confirm face tags across your archive
Stats	Tag counts and coverage statistics per person
Tools	Database tools, backup, export, and maintenance
Import	Import new photos from a camera, USB drive or folder
Search	Search your archive by person, date, location or filename
Settings	Licence, theme, and application preferences

## 6. Importing Photos

The Import tab is a safe, intelligent tool for bringing new photos into your archive. It compares incoming photos against your archive using both file names and content — exact duplicates are automatically skipped, and conflicts are flagged for review.

### How to run an import

1. Click the Import tab
2. In the Source field, click Browse and navigate to the folder containing your new photos
3. In the Archive field, confirm the path to your main photo archive
4. Make sure Dry run (preview only) is ticked
5. Click Scan & Compare and wait for the scan to complete
6. Review the results — New, Exact duplicates, and Conflicts are shown
7. If you have conflicts, review each one and choose an action
8. When happy, untick Dry run and click Import New Files

■ **IMPORTANT — Keep your source folder in place until Import is complete. The golden rule: Scan → Review conflicts → Import → THEN tidy up.**

### Understanding the conflict actions

Keep Archive copy	Keep the version already in your archive. The incoming file is skipped.
Replace with Incoming	Overwrite the archive version with the new incoming file.
Keep Both (rename)	Keep both files — you choose a new name for the incoming one.
Delete Archive	Delete the archive version. Only use if you are certain.

<b>Keep Both (auto v2)</b>	Keep both files — FamilyVault automatically names the incoming one _v2.
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*Tip — Dry run first, always — it costs nothing and shows exactly what will happen.*

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## 7. Searching Your Archive

The Search tab lets you find photos by person, date range, location, filename, or any combination of filters.

### Search filters

- Person — find all photos containing a specific family member
- Date from / to — narrow results to a date range
- Filename — search by filename, supports wildcards such as DSC\_027\* or \*.NEF
- Has GPS — show only photos that contain location data
- Has Faces — show only photos with at least one tagged face
- Place — search by a saved location name

### Working with search results

Double-click any photo to open it in your image viewer. Right-click for more options including opening the containing folder or jumping to that photo in the Review tab.

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## 8. Reviewing Face Tags

After a face scan, FamilyVault may have uncertain tags — faces it recognised but was not fully confident about. The Review tab is where you confirm or correct these.

### Colour coding

- Green — confirmed tag (you have approved this one)
- Yellow — uncertain tag (FamilyVault needs your help)

### Working through uncertain tags

1. Go to the Review tab
2. Click a row to highlight the face in the photo
3. Use the name dropdown to confirm or correct who it is
4. Click Confirm, or use Confirm All to approve all uncertain tags in one photo

*Tip — Review by Photo mode — Switch to this mode to see all faces in a single photo grouped together. Faster when you have many uncertain tags.*

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## 9. Enrolling Family Members

Enrolment teaches FamilyVault to recognise a person. You only need to do this once. The more photos you use, the better the recognition accuracy.

### How to enrol someone

1. Go to the Enrol tab
2. Click Browse and select a folder containing photos of that person
3. Click Scan Folder — FamilyVault will detect faces in the photos
4. For each detected face, confirm it is the correct person
5. Click Save — their face data is added to the database

*Tip — Re-enrolment — If a person has fewer than 5 embeddings, recognition accuracy will be lower. Use the Stats tab to check counts and re-enrol if needed.*

## 10. Supported File Formats

Format	Type	Notes
.NEF	Nikon RAW	Full support including face recognition
.DNG	Adobe/Generic RAW	Full support including face recognition
.JPG / .JPEG	JPEG	Full support
.PNG	PNG	Full support
.TIFF / .TIF	TIFF	Full support
.HEIC / .HEIF	Apple High Efficiency	Full support — iPhone photos
.MP4 / .MOV	Video	Recognised in archive — video tagging coming soon
.ZIP	Archive	Not supported directly — extract first, then import
.JSON	Metadata sidecar	Ignored — these are Amazon Photos export files

## 11. Importing from Amazon Photos

Amazon Photos exports your photos as a series of zip files — typically named AmazonPhotos.zip, AmazonPhotos(1).zip and so on.

1. Download all zip files from Amazon Photos to a folder on your computer
2. Extract each zip into the same parent folder — right-click and Extract Here
3. Open FamilyVault and go to the Import tab
4. Set Source to the folder containing the extracted photos
5. Set Archive to your main FamilyVault archive folder
6. Tick Dry run and click Scan & Compare
7. Review results and conflicts, then run the real import

■ **Do not delete the extracted folders until Import is complete. Amazon Photos .json sidecar files are ignored automatically.**

## 12. Backups and Data Safety

FamilyVault stores all face tag data in a database file called nef\_index.db. Your original photo files are never modified.

### Automatic backups

FamilyVault automatically backs up the database on startup. Backups are stored in the db\_backups folder inside your FamilyVault installation folder.

### Manual backup

Go to the Tools tab and use the Backup Database button to create a manual backup at any time. Do this before any large import or major changes.

### What FamilyVault does NOT do

FamilyVault does not back up your photo files — that is your responsibility. Always keep at least one backup copy of your photo archive on a separate drive.

## 13. Troubleshooting

### Conflict image shows 'Cannot load image'

The source folder has been moved, renamed, or the drive unmounted since the scan.

- Check that the source folder is still in exactly the same location
- If you used a USB drive, check it is still mounted
- Re-run the scan with the source folder in the correct location

### Face recognition is not finding someone

- Check their embedding count in Stats tab — fewer than 5 means re-enrolment needed
- Re-enrol with clearer, better-lit photos from multiple angles
- Avoid photos with sunglasses, hats, or very small faces

### Application is slow on large archives

- Face recognition is CPU intensive — this is normal on large archives
- Close other applications while running a full archive scan

### A face is being tagged as the wrong person

- Go to the Review tab, find the incorrect tag and correct it
- If it keeps recurring, re-enrol the correct person with more photos

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## 14. Privacy — Your Data Stays With You

FamilyVault was built because family photos deserve to stay private.

### FamilyVault privacy commitment

- All face recognition runs entirely on your computer
- No photos are ever uploaded anywhere
- No face data is ever sent to any server
- No internet connection is required to use FamilyVault
- Your licence key is verified locally — no personal data is transmitted
- FamilyVault does not collect analytics
- FamilyVault does not phone home
- FamilyVault does not store anything outside your own computer