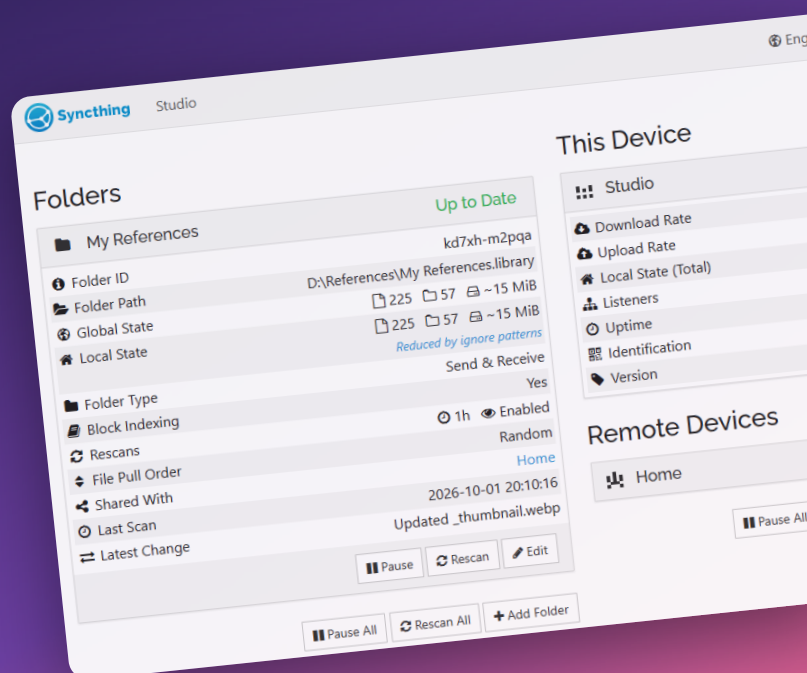




TagRef

One library on several computers

A step-by-step guide: how to set up TagRef and the free Synching app so that your library updates itself on all your computers.



App version 0.6.5 · © 2026 iKarasev · www.ikarasev.com/tagref

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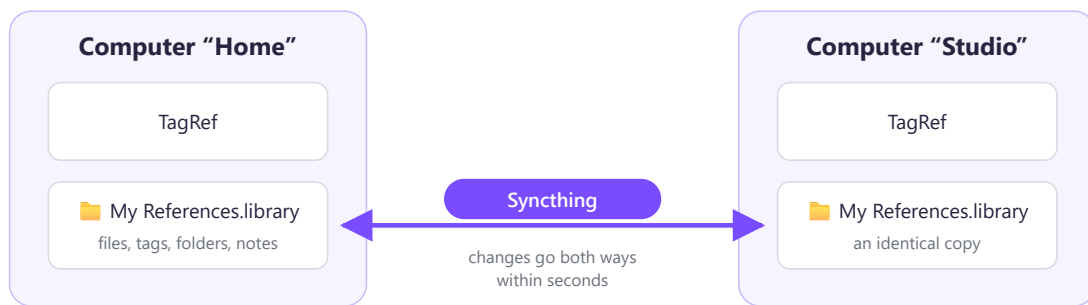
Click any line to jump to that section. Your PDF viewer also shows the same list in the “Bookmarks” panel on the left.

1 How it works

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A TagRef library is a regular folder whose name ends with `.library`. If this folder is the same on all your computers, the library is the same everywhere too.

The free **Syncthing** app keeps the folder identical. It sends changes **directly between your computers**: no cloud, no size limits, no subscription. The computers don't have to be on the same network — Syncthing finds them over the internet too.



TagRef watches the folder of the open library. Everything that arrives from another computer appears in the app immediately, without restarting: new files, tags, folders, smart folders, notes, ratings and deletions.

What is not synced

The app's own settings (theme, language, keyboard shortcuts, add-ons) are stored separately on each computer — set them up on each one.

What you need

- Two or more computers with TagRef (Windows or Mac, mixed is fine).
- The Syncthing app on each of them — installed in step 2.
- About 15 minutes for the first setup.

The computers exchange data directly

Changes are transferred when both computers are on and Syncthing is running on them. If the second computer was off, it receives everything right after it is turned on.

Setup plan

Step	Where	What we do
1	First computer	Find the library folder
2	All computers	Install Syncthing
3	Both	Link the computers to each other
4	First	Share the library folder
5	Second	Accept the folder and wait for the first sync
6	Second	Open the library in TagRef

2 Step 1. Find the library folder

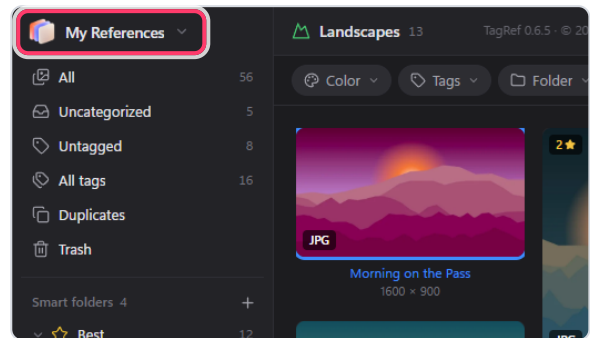
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In this guide the first computer (where the library already exists) is called “**Home**”, and the second one “**Studio**”.

On the first computer (“Home”) open TagRef and click the **library name** in the top-left corner. Choose **Show library in Explorer** (on a Mac — in **Finder**).

A folder opens with your library selected — the folder whose name ends with `.library`, for example `D:\References\My References.library`.

Remember or copy its path: you will need it in step 4. To copy the path in File Explorer, right-click the folder and choose “Copy as path”.



The library name — in the top-left corner

Where to keep the library

On a drive with plenty of free space: the library takes the same amount of space on each computer. If you sync with Syncthing, don't put it inside a cloud drive folder (Yandex Disk, OneDrive, Google Drive): two sync systems will get in each other's way.

3 Step 2. Install Syncthing

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Syncthing is needed on **each** computer. It is a free open-source app; its website is syncthing.net.

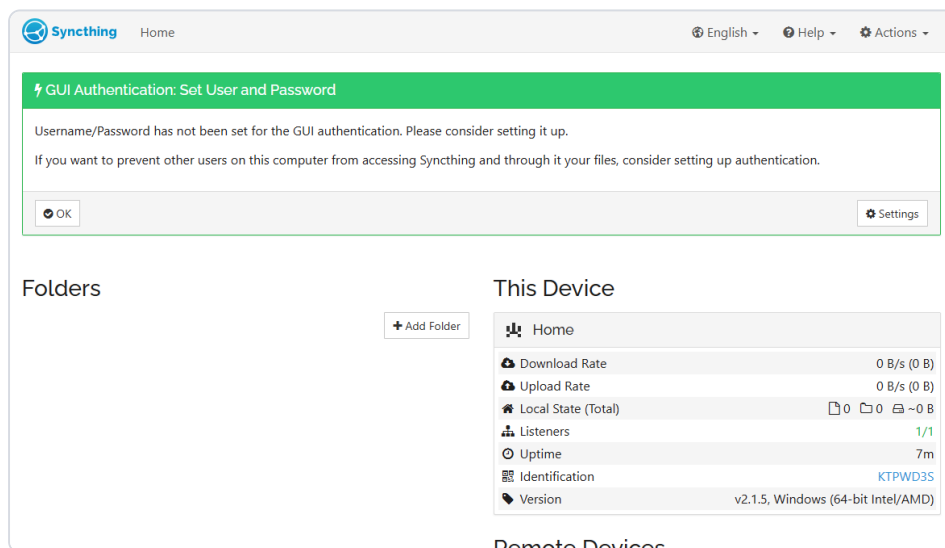
Windows

1. Open the downloads page syncthing.net/downloads and in the Windows section choose **Syncthing Windows Setup** — a simple installer. It leads to github.com/Bill-Stewart/SyncthingWindowsSetup, where you download the installer `.exe` from the Releases section.
2. Run the installer and keep the **current user** installation option (it is the default).
3. The installer sets Syncthing up to start when you sign in to Windows — from then on it runs quietly in the background.
4. If Windows asks whether to allow Syncthing network access, click **Allow access**.
5. Open the Syncthing settings: **Start** → **Syncthing** → **Syncthing Configuration Page**. They open in the browser at `http://127.0.0.1:8384`.

Mac

1. On syncthing.net/downloads, in the macOS section choose **syncthing-macos** and download the `.dmg` file.
2. Open it, drag Syncthing to Applications and launch it.
3. The Syncthing icon appears in the menu bar at the top of the screen. The settings open from it: the **Open** item.

First launch



Syncthing settings on first launch

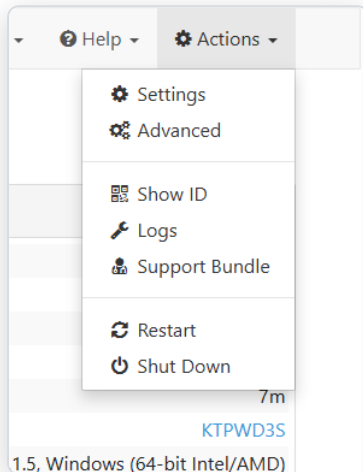
- The language is chosen automatically. You can change it in the menu with the globe icon at the top.
- The green "GUI Authentication" message suggests setting a password for the settings page. It only opens on this computer anyway, so you can just click **OK**. If other people use the computer, set a password: **Settings** → the "GUI" tab.
- You can change the computer's name ("Home" in the screenshot): **Actions** → **Settings** → "Device Name". Clear names make the next steps easier.

4 Step 3. Link the computers

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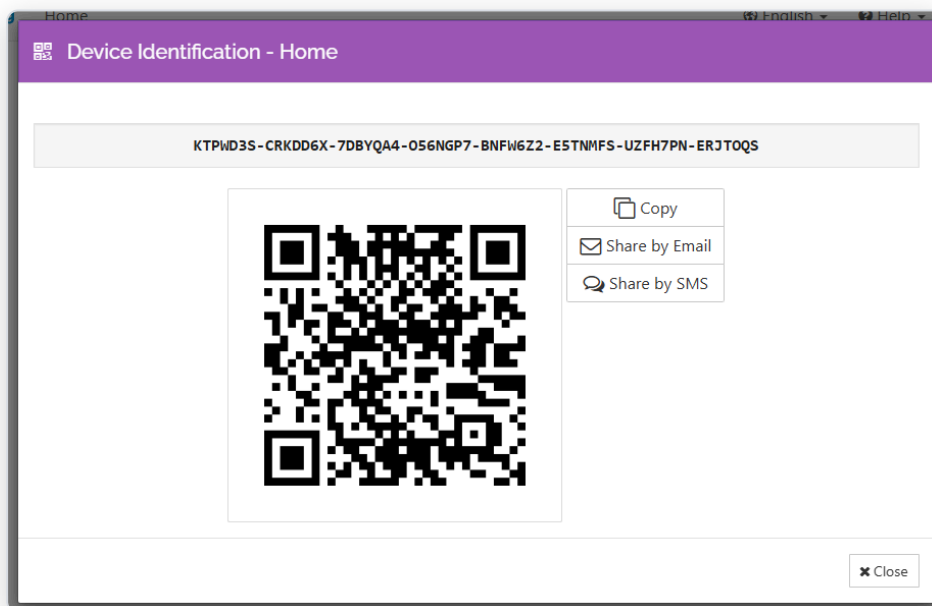
Each computer in Synthing has its own **ID** — a long code of letters and digits. One computer is “introduced” to the other by this code.

3.1. Copy the ID of the first computer



On the “Home” computer, in the Synthing settings, open the **Actions** menu (top right) and choose **Show ID**.

The window shows this computer’s ID and a QR code. Click **Copy** and pass the ID to the second computer any way you like — for example, send it to yourself in a messenger.



The ID of the “Home” computer

3.2. Add the first computer on the second one

On the “Studio” computer, at the bottom of the page, in the “Remote Devices” section, click **Add Remote Device**.

Studio English Help

Add Device (Home)

General Sharing Advanced

Device ID

KTPWD3S-CRKDD6X-7DBYQA4-056NGP7-BNFW6Z2-E5TNMFS-UZFH7PN-ERJTOQS

The device ID to enter here can be found in the "Actions > Show ID" dialog on the other device. Spaces and dashes are optional (ignored). When adding a new device, keep in mind that this device must be added on the other side too.

Device Name

Home

Shown instead of Device ID in the cluster status. Will be updated to the name the device advertises if left empty.

Device Group

Optional group for the device. Can be different on each device.

Save Close

- **Device ID** — paste the copied ID of "Home".
- **Device Name** — for example, "Home".
- Click **Save**.

Computers next to each other, on the same network?

Then you may not need to copy the ID: in this window Synching shows nearby computers it has found under the ID field — just pick the right one.

3.3. Confirm on the first computer

A few seconds later a yellow "New Device" message appears on "Home": "Studio" wants to connect.

New Device 2026-10-01 20:08:19

Device "Studio" (36DQTOG-W5SM7NI-PW7WOOO-ETG2KFG-KPKEU4B-XNEISQX-ZKK6ARO-M6RWEAE at 127.0.0.1:22102) wants to connect. Add new device?

+ Add Device x Ignore o Dismiss

Click **Add Device**. A window opens with the ID and name already filled in — click **Save**.

Home Add Device (Studio)

General Sharing Advanced

Device ID

36DQTOG-W5SM7NI-PW7W000-ETG2KFG-KPKEU4B-XNEISQX-ZKK6ARO-M6RWEAE

Device Name

Studio

Shown instead of Device ID in the cluster status. Will be updated to the name the device advertises if left empty.

Device Group

Optional group for the device. Can be different on each device.

Save Close

This Device

Home

Download Rate	0 B/s (0 B)
Upload Rate	0 B/s (0 B)
Local State (Total)	0 0 ~0 B
Listeners	1/1
Uptime	7m
Identification	KTPWD3S
Version	v2.1.5, Windows (64-bit Intel/AMD)

Remote Devices

Studio Connected (Unused)

Pause All Recent Changes Add Remote Device

The computers are linked: "Connected"

"Studio" appears in the "Remote Devices" section with a green "Connected" label. "Unused" means there are no shared folders yet — we add one in the next step.

5 Step 4. Share the library

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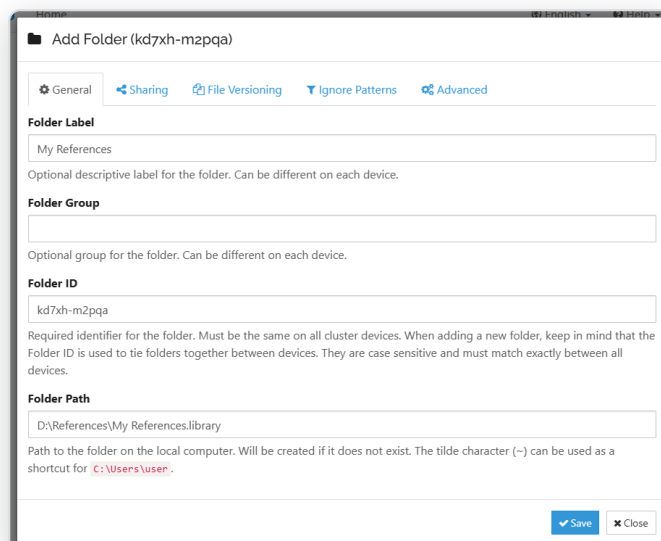
Everything in this step is done on the “Home” computer, where the library already exists. Click **Add Folder** in the “Folders” section.

4.1. The “General” tab

- **Folder Label** — for example, “My References”. It’s just a caption.
- **Folder ID** is filled in automatically; leave it as is.
- **Folder Path** — paste the path from step 1, to the **.library** folder itself, not to the folder that contains it.

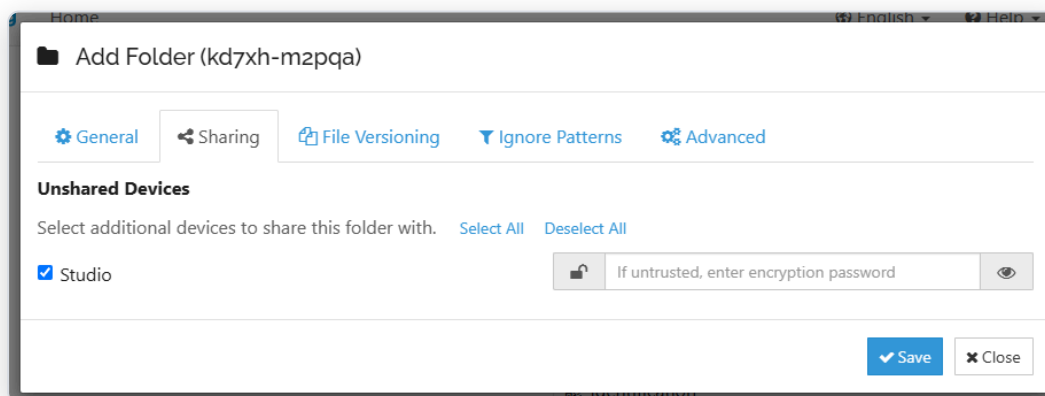
Important

The path must end with **.library**. If you choose the folder above it, Syncthing will also sync everything else that is in it.



The screenshot shows the 'Add Folder (kd7xh-m2pqa)' dialog box with the 'General' tab selected. The 'Folder Label' is 'My References', the 'Folder ID' is 'kd7xh-m2pqa', and the 'Folder Path' is 'D:\References\My References.library'. The 'Folder Path' field has a tooltip that says: 'Path to the folder on the local computer. Will be created if it does not exist. The tilde character (~) can be used as a shortcut for C:\Users\user\.' At the bottom right are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons.

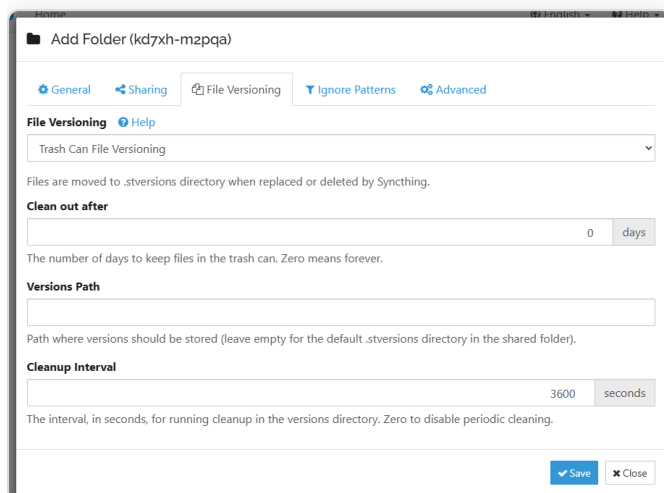
4.2. The “Sharing” tab



The screenshot shows the 'Add Folder (kd7xh-m2pqa)' dialog box with the 'Sharing' tab selected. Under 'Unshared Devices', there is a checkbox for 'Studio' which is checked. To the right of the checkbox is a field with a lock icon and the text 'If untrusted, enter encryption password'. At the bottom right are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons.

Check the second computer — “Studio”. If there are several computers, check all of them.

4.3. The “File Versioning” tab — insurance against mistakes



The screenshot shows the 'Add Folder (kd7xh-m2pqa)' dialog box with the 'File Versioning' tab selected. The 'File Versioning' section has a dropdown menu set to 'Trash Can File Versioning'. Below this, there is a 'Clean out after' field set to '0' days. The 'Versions Path' field is empty. The 'Cleanup Interval' field is set to '3600' seconds. At the bottom right, there are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons.

Choose “Trash Can File Versioning”.

Now, if a file is deleted or changed on another computer, the previous version isn’t lost — it goes to the hidden `.stversions` folder. You can restore it with the **Versions** button of the folder in Syncthing.

“Clean out after” — after how many days old versions are deleted (0 means never). For example, 30.

Click **Save**.

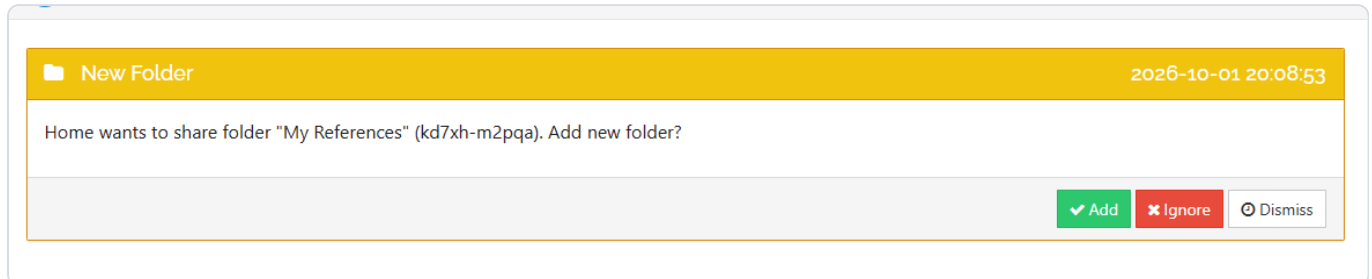
You can leave the “Ignore Patterns” tab alone

TagRef itself puts a `.stignore` file into the library folder so that Syncthing doesn’t transfer the app’s temporary files.

6 Step 5. Accept the folder on the second computer

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A yellow “New Folder” message appears on the “Studio” computer: “Home” offers the folder “My References”.

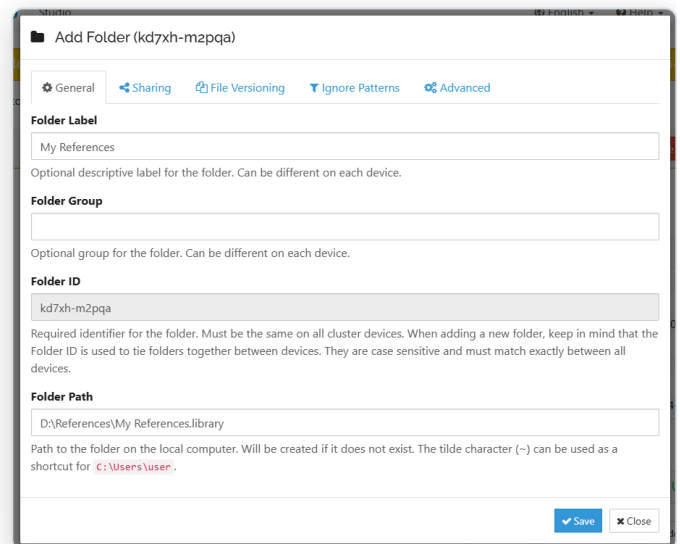


Click **Add**. The folder window opens with the label and ID already filled in.

Check the **Folder Path** — where the library will be stored on this computer. Pick a drive with enough space and keep a name ending with `.library` at the end, for example `D:\References\My References.library`. This folder must not exist yet — Syncthing creates it.

On the “File Versioning” tab choose “Trash Can” here too, as in step 4.3.

Click **Save**.



Wait for the first sync

Syncthing starts copying the library. The folder shows “Syncing” and a percentage. The first time can take a while — it depends on the library size and the network speed.


Syncthing
Studio
English ▾
Help ▾
Actions ▾

Folders


My References
Up to Date

Folder ID	kd7xh-m2pqa
Folder Path	D:\References\My References.library
Global State	📄 225 📁 57 🗂 ~15 MiB
Local State	📄 225 📁 57 🗂 ~15 MiB <i>Reduced by ignore patterns</i>
Folder Type	Send & Receive
Block Indexing	Yes
Rescans	🕒 1h 👁 Enabled
File Pull Order	Random
Shared With	Home
Last Scan	2026-10-01 20:10:16
Latest Change	Updated_thumbnail.webp

⏸ Pause
🔄 Rescan
✎ Edit

⏸ Pause All
🔄 Rescan All
+ Add Folder

This Device

Download Rate	0 B/s (15 MiB)
Upload Rate	0 B/s (58.5 KiB)
Local State (Total)	📄 225 📁 57 🗂 ~15 MiB
Listeners	1/1
Uptime	12m
Identification	36DQTOG
Version	v2.1.5, Windows (64-bit Intel/AMD)

Remote Devices


Home
Up to Date
📶

⏸ Pause All
🕒 Recent Changes
+ Add Remote Device

Done: the folder is "Up to Date", "Home" is connected

When the folder shows a green "Up to Date", the library on "Studio" fully matches "Home".

Don't open the library in TagRef before the first sync is finished

Otherwise the app sees a half-copied library. Wait for "Up to Date" — this is needed only once.

7 Step 6. Open the library in TagRef

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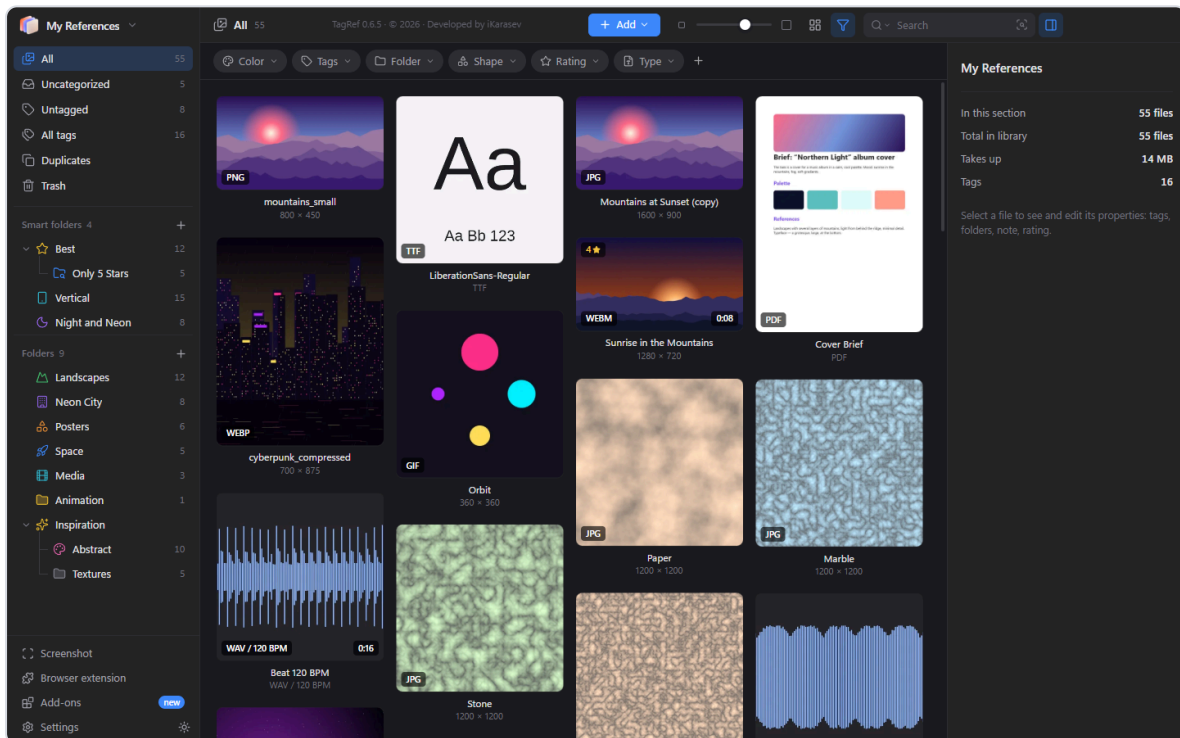
On the “Studio” computer open TagRef.

- TagRef is started for the first time — on the start screen click **Open library** and choose the `.library` folder from step 5.
- TagRef already works with its own library — click the library name in the top-left corner → **Open another library...** → choose the same folder.

Don't create a new library — you need exactly the folder that Synthing brought.



Start screen: “Open library”



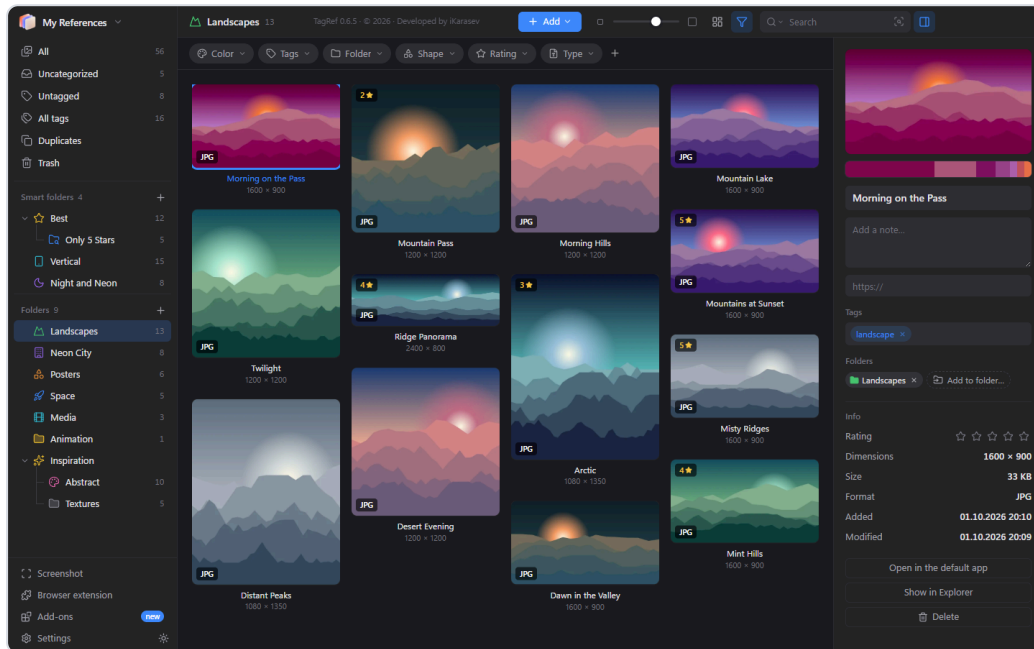
The same library is open on “Studio”: the same files, folders, tags and smart folders

8 Checking it works

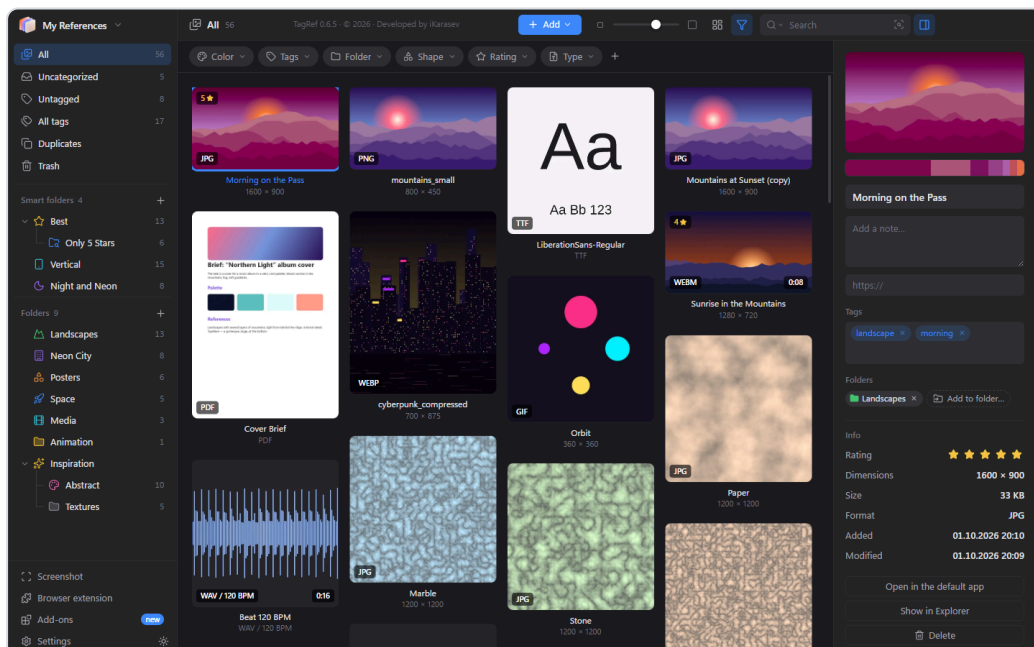
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Let's make sure everything works. Keep TagRef open on both computers.

1. On **"Home"**, add a new image to the library and give it a tag and stars.
2. Look at **"Studio"**: a few seconds later the image appears there by itself, together with the tag and rating. Nothing to click or restart.



"Home": the image "Morning on the Pass" was added to the "Landscapes" folder



"Studio": the image arrived by itself — with its folder, the tags "landscape" and "morning" and a 5-star rating

It works the other way too: everything you change on "Studio" appears on "Home".

- **Just work.** Syncthing starts with the computer and runs unnoticed. Add files, tag them, sort them into folders — changes go to the other computers by themselves.
- **TagRef can stay open on all computers at once.** Changes appear without restarting.
- **Better not to change the same file on two computers at the same time.** If it happens, TagRef merges the data itself: the file keeps the later edit, and folders from both versions are combined.
- **If a computer was off,** after it is turned on it receives everything that changed without it. You can check that it has caught up in Syncthing: the folder shows “Up to Date”.
- **Deletions are synced too.** The TagRef trash is shared: delete a file on one computer and it is in the trash on the other. File versioning (step 4.3) protects you against mistakes.

A third computer and a laptop

1. Install TagRef and Syncthing on the new computer (step 2).
2. Link it with one of the computers that are already set up (step 3).
3. On that computer, open the library folder in Syncthing → **Edit** → the “Sharing” tab → check the new computer → **Save**.
4. On the new computer, accept the folder (step 5) and open it in TagRef (step 6).

A laptop syncs away from home too: Syncthing finds computers over the internet. Just make sure at least one of the set-up computers is on at that time.

Several libraries

Each library is a separate `.library` folder. To sync another one, repeat steps 4–6 for its folder. You don’t need to link the computers again.

10 Without Syncthing: a cloud drive

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If you already use Yandex Disk, Google Drive or OneDrive, you can keep the library there. TagRef picks up the changes just the same.

1. On the first computer **quit TagRef completely**: the icon next to the clock → **Quit TagRef**.
2. Move the `.library` folder into the cloud drive folder on the computer.
3. Start TagRef → library name → **Open another library...** → choose the folder in its new place.
4. On the second computer, wait until the cloud has downloaded the whole folder, and open it in TagRef the same way.

The folder must be stored on the computer in full

Cloud drives can keep files “online only” and download them on demand — that doesn’t work for a library. Turn on permanent local storage for its folder. In OneDrive: right-click the folder → “Always keep on this device”. In Google Drive: settings → “Mirror files”. In other clouds look for a similar option.

Which to choose

	Syncthing	Cloud drive
Price	Free, no size limits	Limited free space, then a subscription
Speed	Directly between computers, usually within seconds	Through the cloud server, sometimes with a delay
Do both computers need to be on	Yes, at least sometimes at the same time	No, the cloud keeps a copy
Where the files are stored	Only on your computers	Also on the cloud’s servers

Don’t use both methods at once

If the library is in a cloud folder, don’t add it to Syncthing as well. Two sync systems will fight each other and create duplicates.

11 Troubleshooting

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What you see	What to do
The second computer is “Disconnected”	Check that both computers are on and Syncthing is running on both (on Windows: Start → Syncthing → Start Syncthing). If Windows asked about network access and access was denied, allow Syncthing in Windows Firewall.
No “New Device” or “New Folder” message	Check that the ID was copied in full. Wait a minute and refresh the Syncthing settings page. In step 4.2 the second computer must be checked.
The folder is “Out of Sync” or shows an error	Click the folder in Syncthing — it lists the errors. Most often it’s a lack of disk space or a wrong folder path.
Syncing takes very long	The first time the whole library is copied — that’s normal. After that only changes are transferred.
Files with “sync-conflict” in their names appeared	Syncthing kept a second version because the same thing was changed on two computers at once. TagRef merges the library data itself. Such copies can be deleted.
A file was deleted by mistake	If it’s still in the TagRef trash, restore it there. If the trash was emptied — Syncthing → the folder → Versions (with file versioning from step 4.3 turned on).
TagRef doesn’t show changes from the other computer	Check in Syncthing that the folder is “Up to Date” on both computers. Make sure TagRef has the synced folder open: library name → “Show library in Explorer”.

The main rule

On each computer TagRef must open the `.library` folder that Syncthing syncs. Don’t create a new library on the second computer and don’t copy it by hand over the synced one.

Syncthing is an independent open-source project (syncthing.net), not affiliated with TagRef. The screenshots were made in Syncthing v2.1.5; in other versions button names may differ slightly. © 2026 iKarasev · www.ikarasev.com/tagref