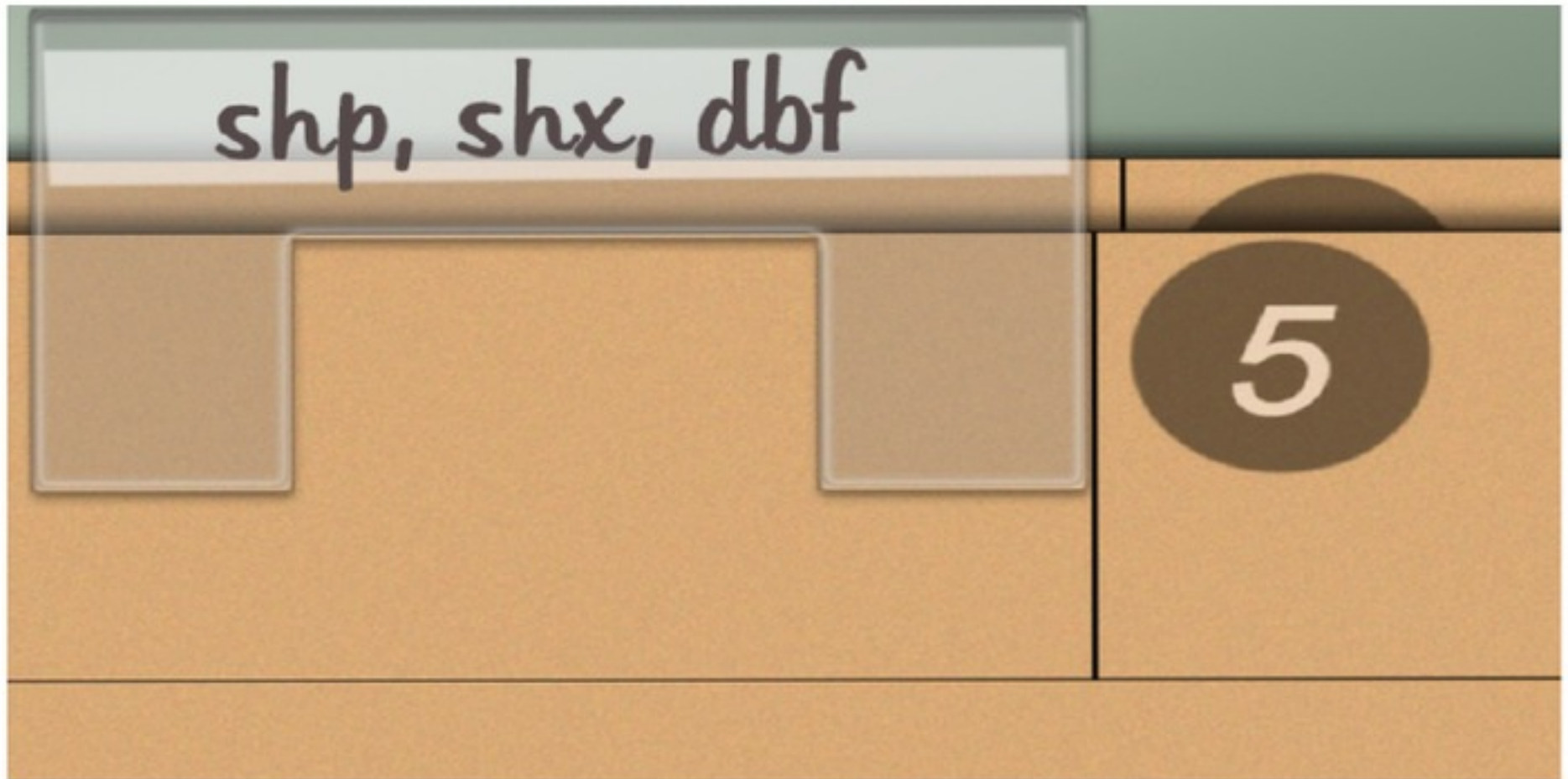# ArcGIS Shapefile Files Types & Extensions

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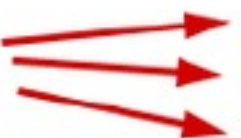

What are the shapefile files?

ArcGIS shapefiles have mandatory and optional files. The mandatory file extensions needed for a shapefile are .shp, .shx and .dbf. But the optional files are: .prj, .xml, .sbn and .sbx

What is the **function of each of these ArcGIS file types**? Also, how do you open these GIS files?

If you have several hours to spare, you could go through the **34-page ESRI Shapefile Technical Description document**.

If time is a factor, than we suggest to read further. Let's take a closer inspection at what makes up an ArcGIS shapefile.