

# Long Term Archive Frequently Asked Questions

This page is targeted at users who want to learn more on the LOFAR LTA (Long Term Archive). It should answer the most common questions and provide help in case of difficulties in data retrieval. If the questions on this page did not succeed to solve any issues you may encounter, please send a mail to Science Support.

## Questions

- **Q:** [I never worked with the LTA before. Where is a good starting point?](#)
- **Q:** [Why is data retrieval so difficult?](#)

## Answers

### I never worked with the LTA before. Where is a good starting point?

New users are advised to read through the [LTA How-To](#), our tutorial page, which guides you through the whole process from getting an account over finding you data to the actual download.

### Why is data retrieval so difficult?

It is important to understand the the data volumes of LOFAR are pretty huge and handling them requires different technologies than what we all know and use in our everyday life. For instance, LTA data is [stored on magnetic tape and has to be copied to a hard drive \('staged'\)](#) before it can be retrieved. To transfer these amounts of data within reasonable time requires [careful consideration](#) and [special tools](#). We try to make the LTA as convenient to use as possible, e.g. by providing http downloads for users without Grid certificate and portable Grid tools for those who want or need the extra performance. We are aware of the fact that data retrieval is quite close to the backend technology and we hope to be able to provide solutions with higher abstraction in the future.

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