

Capacity

File size vs. disk capacity

Many operators cannot relate the proportions of *file size* to *disk capacity*. This is understandable. We are not used to working with quantities in the billions. We can't visualize or place in physical terms anything that large. We are, however, better equipped to deal with proportions. Half of a pie. A glass of milk (8 oz.) is 1/8th (or 12.5%) of a gallon (64 oz.).

Dealing with a physical "touch and feel" world is easy. Operators can see a long list of file names. Therefore, there are a lot of files. The names take up a lot of space on the display and therefore take up a lot of computer storage space. Right? *Probably not.*

"You can't tell a book by its cover" is an old saying that applies here. The name on the cover (or in this case the file list) doesn't tell you anything about the size of the book.

Looking again at files based on proportional space used, a 1K (1000 bytes) shortcut takes less than 0.000000000001% of a 6GB hard drive (6,000,000,000 bytes). If you were asked to draw a line which was 0.000000000001% of an inch, it would be several times thinner than the leg of a fly.

This is a drastic example but operators who are trying to make extra room on their hard drive start by clearing small files and shortcuts, expecting to see massive changes in available storage capacity. This is not the way to obtain that goal. Don't misunderstand me, remove old unwanted files and shortcuts. But do this just to keep your system clean.

Gaining space

To gain large amounts of storage quickly, remove unused applications. (See Control Panel Add/Remove programs.) Many programs have uninstall features. Use them, then go back to the directory where they were originally loaded and be sure that all parts of the program have been removed.

O.K. I know the next question. How do I know where they were originally loaded. That's easy! But, you have to do this step before uninstalling the application. Follow the steps outlined in the chapter Shortcuts and find the shortcut to the application. Right-click on the shortcut and select properties. The text box 'Target:' will show you the location (path and folder) of the program.

Well, that was fairly easy. All you had to do was apply the concepts and ideas that have been presented throughout this book.

Everybody knows a little bit about cooking. Most started this learning experience by boiling water. Although that didn't result in a very satisfying meal, it was a start. Adding a couple of hot dogs extended our cooking abilities to a useful level. As our gourmet talents advance, we may want to add spices to the water to enhance the flavor. Learning when and which spices to apply is the result of experience and trial and error. Likewise, learning when and how to apply Windows features is a matter of applying different techniques.

If you have downloaded programs from the Internet, they are probably in the form of compressed files. Once these applications are installed, the source files which you downloaded can be deleted. Remember to keep a log of the file's name which you downloaded to make this job easier. Also placing all your downloads into a folder called DOWNLOADS makes this cleanup process easier. (See the Find chapter.)

Clearing the TEMP directories.

There is a folder where most programs place temporary files. C:\WINDOWS\TEMP. The files generally have an extension of .TMP or a '~' as the first character in the files name. As an operator, you should never place anything in this folder. All files in this folder can be deleted. Some applications are not very tidy and don't completely clean up after themselves.

Before clearing the folders files, exit all applications. - NOTE THAT I DIDN'T STATE DELETE THE FOLDER. Some programs, like anti-virus programs keep files in the TEMP folder and won't allow you to delete them. You will be warned if this is the case.

Clearing the Internet temp files - Each new version of the Internet browsers finds a different way to hide temporary files. While surfing the net, each site you visit loads files on your computer. These might be the graphics you viewed. The intention is that if you return to the same site, you won't have to spend time downloading the graphics again. This speeds reload viewing time. However if you never go back to this site, you may be left with unneeded garbage. Graphics files can take quite a bit of room.

COOKIES leave crumbs. Several sites leave cookies on your computer. These are very small files which contain information about your preferences, recent searches that you have made on a particular site, or passwords that you entered. NOTE: This does not mean that these files contain passwords to your private programs - only the password that you used to gain access to that particular site. The cookie of a particular site is retrieved from your computer each time you revisit the site to save you time gaining access. Deleting the cookie for a particular site may require that you go through the sign on procedure again to access the site. If you forgot the password you used, or were issued, this can be a problem. Again, keep a log to help you.

If you have used Windows Explorer and found the folder which holds your cookies, you will notice something interesting. The status bar won't tell you how much storage space is consumed by the cookies. Generally when you click on a folder in the left panel, the number of objects in the folder is displayed along with the space used. This information has now been hidden from you. But, since you are now an advanced user, you know to right-click on the folder and select properties from the menu list to get this information.

Clearing the Recycle bin (See the Recycle bin chapter.) Don't wait until the Recycle bin is overflowing.

Many users delete files from their computer but never empty the Recycle bin. To state this another way, it is like disposing of household garbage by placing it in bags which you leave at the back door. The garbage isn't really gone.

Deleting files only places them in the Recycle bin but doesn't free the storage space in your computer. Inspect the Recycle bin regularly. Make sure that the files you wanted to delete are completely gone.

As a consultant, I am oftentimes called to a client's site because their computer is "missing files" and programs won't run. The first place I look is the Recycle Bin. I am usually greeted with a multitude of files dating back years. This greatly complicates my job and adds to the customer's cost of repair.

The date shown in the Recycle bin reflects the date deleted. By sorting the files by date, I can sometimes find the missing files and RESTORE them.

