

Compressed File Formats

Cabinet files. Windows 95 was originally distributed on CDROM and floppy disk. Only disk 1 of the floppy disk version was formatted with the standard 1.44MB format. All other disks used a 1.67MB format. The disks contained a compressed file with a .CAB extension. These disks cannot be duplicated using DISKCOPY. It was Microsoft's way of preventing illegal copies of the software from being made.

Cabinet files are also used on the Windows 98 distribution CDROM and with several other Microsoft products. If you have a version of Windows 95 before OSR2 (also known as version B) you will need the Cabinet File Viewer distributed with Powertoy to extract files. To find your version level of windows, go to Control Panel | System. Under the label System:, you will see Microsoft Windows 9x. Below that is a number. If the number ends in a letter of 'B' or greater, you have OSR2 on your system. If not, you need to acquire OSR2. It parts of are free from the Microsoft site.

The .CAB files, like the .zip files mentioned below, can contain many compressed files. The Extract command can be used to extract individual files.

PKZIP, distributed by PKWARE, inc., and WINZIP distributed by Microsoft are programs which allow you to compress data. Both programs produce compressed data files which have a .zip extensions. Before your computer can used the data contained in a compressed format you have to 'Extract' the information by running the file through PKZIP or WINZIP. If you have either of these programs loaded on your computer, the extraction process will start automatically by double clicking on the file's name.

Compressed files can also be distributed with an .EXE extension. Files distributed in this manner have the decompression program included in the file. This has the added convenience that the user does not have to have a copy of the extraction program, although it makes the file size slightly larger.

RAR is another compression format sometimes used on the Windows platform, but has not received wide usage.

