Dan's Desktop
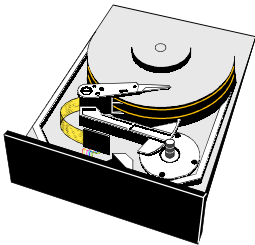
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Make Space for More Programs and Data

Sooner or later you're going to find you do not have enough space on your hard drive to install a new software package. There are a number of options to consider:

- Delete files and programs that you never use. Delete files that you can live without.
- Install a data compressor such as Stacker
- Have a new, higher capacity hard drive installed.

The first option will work for a while. The third option is very expensive, possibly as much as $500. With the current price of PCs you might as well invest the additional money and replace your entire PC (you can probably use the same monitor).

The most reasonable option is to install a product like Stacker. Stacker compresses your files so they take up about half as much space on your hard drive. When your PC needs to use the file, Stacker uncompresses it so it can be used.

I recently installed Stacker on one of my PCs and nearly doubled the capacity of my hard drive. *Some care should be taken in installing this or any compression program.* Some hard drive space needs to be available for the program itself, and a fairly large amount of hard drive space should be set aside so files can be moved and compressed.

I went from having just 7 meg left on my hard drive to having over 100 meg. It's only a 210 meg drive!

I needed to delete a number of files and uninstall my Microsoft Office software to free up 40 meg or so. It was worth it. I went from having just 7 meg left on my hard drive to having over 100 meg. It's only a 210 meg drive!

Some programs and data may not be appropriate for compression. I haven't encountered any problem in this regard, but I have avoided moving any system files to the stacker "drive".

Stacker includes a number of useful utilities including a defragmentor. A defragmentor reorganizes your disk space to make it more efficient.

Besides tremendously increasing my disk space, Stacker has also greatly increased the speed of my computer. The time it takes for Stacker to uncompress a file is more than made up for by the fact that the file is much smaller when it is put into memory. Defragmenting the disk also greatly improves performance.

Note: My PC has been upgraded to have 8 meg of memory. This contributes a lot to the performance of the computer.

Stacker 4.0 is available for under $100. I paid about $85 for the CD ROM version.

Office Construction Nearing Completion

The work on the renovations to our basement and garage should be complete by the end of the year. Besides a nice size family room, an office is being constructed which will house the two computers and the Epson Stylus Color printer presently located in my dining room and living room.

Laser and Epson Stylus Color Printers Available

In addition to my Canon laser printer, I now have an Epson Stylus Color inkjet printer. Anyone who has a special printing need may take advantage of these printers by setting up an appointment. Pricing depends on the particular print job that needs to be done and on paper stock.

Saving Money As You Upgrade Your Software

Many PCs purchased over the past few years came with Microsoft Works software. This product includes basic word processing, spreadsheet, and data base programs. Many people eventually outgrow these products and want to use software with richer features and capabilities. Sometimes the goal is just to make the software on a home PC consistent with what is used used at work.

A number of options exist to upgrade your systems software. For example, if your goal is to publish a newsletter, brochure, or other document, you might consider purchasing Microsoft Publisher. This package enables you to do some really nice publishing and is very easy to use. Word processing software such as WordPerfect and Microsoft Word have similar capabilities plus extended word processing functions.

If you would like to install a full featured spreadsheet, you might consider Lotus 1-2-3 or Microsoft Excel. Data base software available includes Microsoft Access, Paradox, and Dbase. Many people are choosing to install Microsoft Office which includes Word, Excel, and PowerPoint (a presentation system.). Microsoft Office is supposed to make it easy to share information across these applications. You might think of Microsoft Office as a high-powered version of Microsoft Works (but without a data base program--Microsoft Access is sold separately).

If you do decide to upgrade to a better word processor, spreadsheet, or data base, take care that you do not spend more than you need to. In most cases, you can install the upgrade version of software instead of the regular, more expensive edition of the product. For example, if your PC already has Microsoft Works or most any other word processor, you can buy and install the Word for Windows 6.0 Upgrade. The Upgrade version sells for about $120. The regular version sells for about $250. The software is nearly identical. The difference is that the less expensive, upgrade version checks to see if your system has Word for Windows, Works for Windows, or a competing product already installed.

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Lotus 1-2-3, Paradox, WordPerfect, Excel, and other products often have both upgrade and regular packages. The upgrade packages are usually far less expensive. The upgrades are designed to work with competing products because the software company wants you to switch to their product.

The WordPerfect Upgrade sells for around $90. Word, Excel, and Access Upgrades sell for about $120 each. Word and Excel, along with PowerPoint, are included in the Microsoft Office Upgrade for about $250. Upgrade packages from other software companies are in a similar price range. Microsoft Publisher is about $90, it is not an upgrade, but a separate package.

Be sure to read the package carefully before buying any software:

- Be sure it is labeled as Windows compatible (DOS and Macintosh versions are often available)
- Check the RAM requirements (Microsoft Access requires 6 meg of RAM)
- Check how much space is needed on the hard drive to install the programs

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or would like to take advantage of my shopping and installation services.

Computer and Mathematics Instruction
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