

Local Disk Cleanup

Disk Cleanup Utility

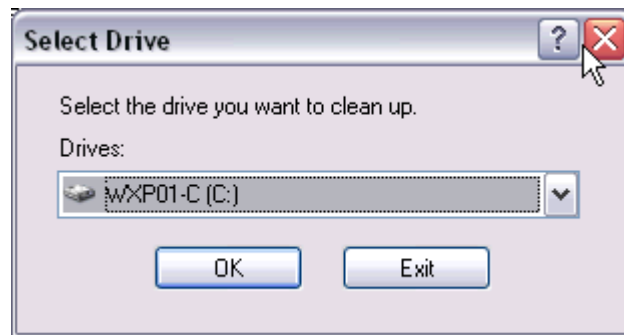
To keep a PC running smoothly, regular maintenance is critical. Many users shy away from maintenance tasks, thinking it is a long, drawn out manual affair, but the Disk Cleanup Utility can easily determine which files on a hard drive may no longer be needed and delete those files. In addition to freeing up potentially significant amounts of hard drive space, using Disk Cleanup on a regular basis can significantly improve system performance.

Starting Disk Cleanup

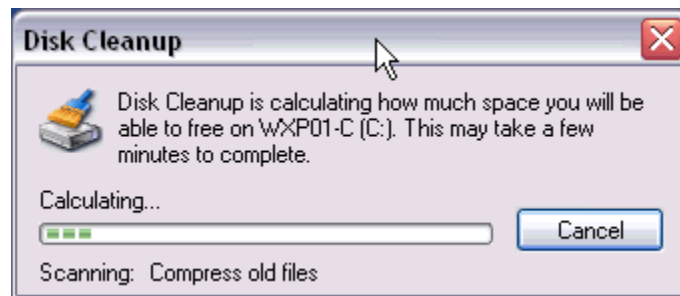
Disk Cleanup is available on both Home and Professional versions of XP. The utility can be accessed in any of the methods listed below.

- Click **Start** | **Programs** | **Accessories** | **System Tools** | **Disk Cleanup**

Use the drop down menu arrow to select the drive you want to clean.



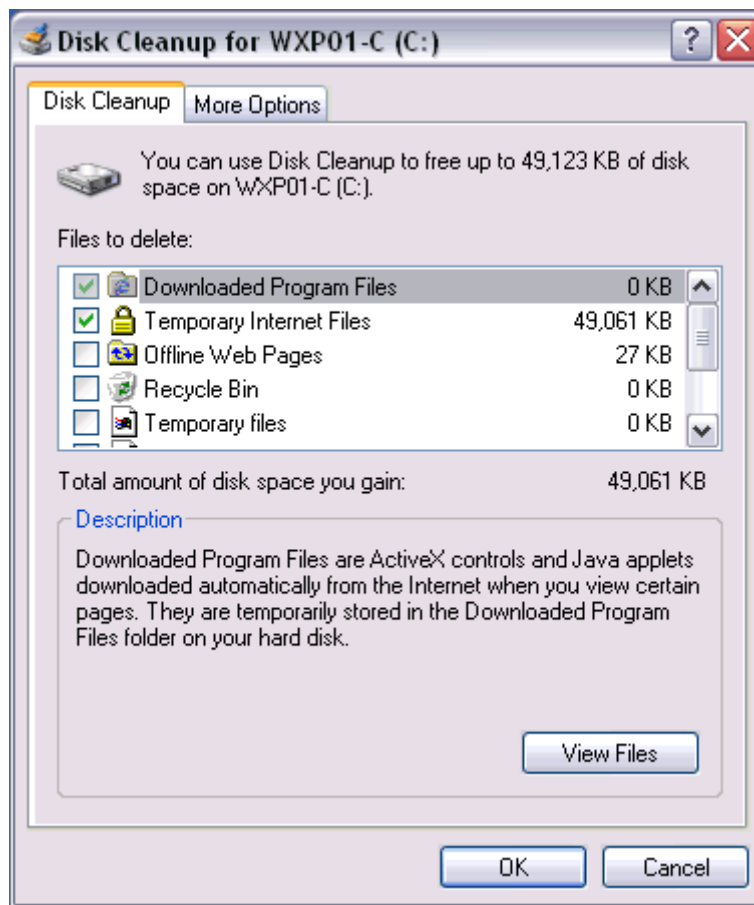
Click **[OK]** and Disk Cleanup will analyze the selected drive to determine the amount of space that can be freed.



Note: Be patient. Analyzing the drive can be a lengthy process depending on drive size and contents.

Once the drive analysis is complete a list of file categories will be presented for your selection.

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Instead of automatically proceeding with cleanup once the drive analysis is complete, Disk Cleanup allows you to review the categories of files that can be deleted. Click on any of the categories to display more information relative to that category in the Description section of the window. If you're unsure if you want to delete the files in a category from the description, use the **[View Files]** button. A complete list of files scheduled for deletion will be displayed in Windows Explorer. Use drag and drop to move any files you want to save to a safe location and leave the category selected. If all the files are to be saved, close the window and then remove the checkmark from the file category so it will not be included in the disk cleanup. After all the categories have been reviewed, click **[OK]** to begin the disk cleanup process.

File Categories in Disk Cleanup Utility

There are a number of different types of file categories that Disk Cleanup targets when it performs the initial disk analysis. Depending on the individual system, you may or may not have all the categories listed below. An excellent example of this would be Backup Files from a Previous Operating System. If a clean install of XP was performed then this category will not exist. It pays to click on each of the categories and note that the [View Files] button can change depending on the category selected.

- Downloaded Program Files

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These are ActiveX controls and Java applets downloaded from Web sites that are temporarily stored in the Downloaded Program Files folder. It's not program files or zip files that you have downloaded from other locations.

- Temporary Internet Files

This refers to Internet Explorer's cache of Web pages that are stored on the hard drive for quicker viewing. None of your personal web settings are affected by selecting this category, nor does it delete any cookie files.

- Recycle Bin

The main thing to be aware of in this category is that it only refers to the Recycle Bin for the selected hard drive or partition. This is important since XP uses an individual Recycle Bin for each drive and partition, not just one as is the case in some Windows versions.

- Temporary Remote Desktop Files

These files are the result of using the Remote Desktop utility. If you repeatedly use Remote Desktop with the same computer or group of computers, leaving these files intact will maintain the speed of future connections. Deleting them will necessitate downloading the remote systems icons and wallpaper the next time a connection is established.

- Setup Log Files

These are really pretty useless unless you have a specific reason to go back and see what occurred during XP setup.

- Backup Files For Previous Operating System

I mentioned this category earlier as one you may not have, but if you did upgrade from a previous Windows version and selected the option to be able to uninstall XP, it may well exist. It takes some major hard drive space to copy all the files necessary to back up a previous system's core files, drivers, etc. This entry can range anywhere from a few hundred megabytes up to a gigabyte, so unless you are still considering dumping XP this is a good category to select.

- Offline Files

Users with slower dialup connections and those using laptops frequently make websites they use often available offline. Depending on how many levels deep you save the sites, they can eat up gigabytes of hard drive space very quickly. Worse than taking up space, the sites often contain outdated information. A good candidate for deletion.

- Compress Old Files

Unlike the other categories, Compress Old Files doesn't delete any files from the drive. It compresses files that Windows hasn't accessed for a specified period of time. The files are still available, but there will be a slight increase in access times because the files will be decompressed the next time they are accessed. Note that when Compress Old Files is highlighted an Options button appears. Clicking it will allow you to set the number of days to wait before an unaccessed file is compressed.

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There may be other categories that appear in your Disk Cleanup window, but in all cases, highlighting the item will display an explanation of the category in the Description area.