AUTHORITATIVE ANSWERS TO YOUR MOST PRESSING PC QUESTIONS. BY DALE LEWALLEN AND JEFF PROSISE

What DOS Files Can I Delete?

There are many files in DOS that I never use. Where can I find listings of the file functions that explain their relations to other files and their functions? I'd like a guide to superfluous files that I can remove from my disk.

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We can probably help with a few recommendations, all predicated on how you use your system. We'll use DOS 5.0 as a basis, although much of this is applicable to other versions.

If you don't use code page switching, you can safely delete the following files from your hard disk: DISPLAY.SYS, PRINTER.SYS, EGA.CPI, 4201.CPI, 4208.CPI, 5202.CPI, LCD.CPI, NLSFUNC.EXE, and GRAFTABL.COM. You can also delete COUNTRY.SYS if your CONFIG.SYS file doesn't contain a COUNTRY command, and KEYB.COM and KEYBOARD.SYS if you don't care to reconfigure your keyboard for use in foreign countries.

If you don't use the DOS 5.0 Shell, you can delete DOSSHELL.* and EGA.SYS. If you do use the Shell but don't have an EGA video adapter, you can save some disk space by deleting EGA.SYS. If your DOS directory contains a file called MSHERC.COM and you don't use a Hercules video adapter, you can delete this file, too.

If your PC contains an 8086 or 8088 CPU, you can delete the DOS files that pertain to memory management—HIMEM.SYS, EMM386.EXE, and LOADFIX.COM. If you have a 286, you can delete EMM386.EXE and LOADFIX.COM, but leave HIMEM.SYS intact so you can load DOS high. If your PC contains neither extended nor expanded memory, you can delete SMARTDRV.SYS, which requires one of the two types of memory.

Some versions of DOS come with an assortment of .BAS files containing sample BASIC programs. If you don't use BASIC, delete *.BAS.

Other obscure or little-used DOS commands that are candidates for deletion include APPEND.EXE (some people use it, but it can be dangerous; you're better off without it), DISKCOMP.COM, EDLIN.EXE, EXE2BIN.EXE, JOIN.EXE, RECOVER.EXE, REPLACE.EXE, and SHARE.EXE (don't delete it if you use Windows). One command file you shouldn't erase is QBASIC.EXE. If you delete it, you won't be able to use the EDIT command because EDIT loads and runs QBASIC.EXE.

We suggest that you copy these files to a floppy disk before deleting them, then store the floppy for safekeeping. If you still have your master DOS disk or disks, you already have a backup copy of the files. Note that most of the files shipped on the disks in the DOS 5.0 upgrade kit are stored in compressed form. To copy them to your hard disk, you'll need DOS's EXPAND.EXE program. Another way to keep copies of these files safe is to archive them with a program such as PKzip or LHARC. Not only will the files themselves be compressed but they'll also consume less space on disk because they will be rolled into a single archive file.

Both compression utilities are available on PC/Contact, *PC/Computing*'s online service. You can find LHARC in data library 0 (General/Forum Info.) as LHA213.EXE and PKzip in data library 3 (Utilities/Misc.) as PKZ110.EXE. For more information on how to participate in PC/Contact, see page 270.

Help About...

RELATIVE VS. ABSOLUTE SPREADSHEET ADDRESSES

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CONFUSED ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELATIVE ADDRESSING AND ABSOLUTE ADDRESSING WHEN CREATING AN EXCEL WORKSHEET. I'VE NEVER HAD TO USE EITHER, BUT I'D LIKE TO KNOW IF I'M MISSING SOMETHING. CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THEY DIFFER?

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Relative and absolute addressing in your worksheet have implications when you move or copy formulas from one cell to another. Say you create an Excel formula in cell C2 to add together the contents of two cells: =SUM(A2:B2). If you copy that formula to cell C4, you would expect Excel to adjust the references so that the new formula looks like this: =SUM(A4:B4). By using relative references, you are telling Excel to keep the *relative* relationships of the formula intact.

Relative

	A	B	C	D
1			TOTAL	
2	1	1	2	=SUM(A2:B2)
3				
4	2	2	4	=SUM(A4:B4)

On the other hand, if you always want Excel to use the contents of one specific cell in the formula, you'll want to use absolute addressing. Your formula in cell C4 will contain one cell address that uses an absolute reference: =SUM($A$2:B2). If you copy this formula to another cell—C5, for instance—it will look like this: =SUM($A$2:B3). The copy command won't adjust the first cell reference because you've used the absolute addressing syntax (the dollar signs before each element of the cell reference, for example) but it will correctly adjust the second reference.

Absolute

	A	B	C	D
1			TOTAL	
2	1	1	2	=SUM($A$2:$B$2)
3				
4	2	2	2	=SUM($A$2:$B$2)

Think of this analogy: If you ask for directions to the police station, I can give them to you in two different ways. If I tell you to drive two blocks, turn right, then turn left, I'm giving you directions that are *relative* to our current position. On the other hand, if I say that the police station is located at 1332 Center St., I'm describing its *absolute* location—one that you can get to from anywhere in the city.