

Left Drivespace — disk space for free?

Below Customise your 'System/General' information

Bottom The indispensable TweakUI to the rescue again

(Original Equipment Manufacturer) tag.

The next way to save cluster space is by partitioning. I've been using the word "drive" rather loosely, but there's a difference between a physical drive and a logical drive. For example, I've got two hard disks in my PC: I can open the box, then see and touch them if I've really got nothing better to do. However, Explorer shows I've got drives C, D, E, F and G, in addition to the floppy A and the CD-ROM H. Of these, C, E, F and G are all partitions of the same 1.7Gb disk. DOS and Windows treat these as separate drives; hence, as each is under 512Mb, I get away with 8Kb clusters.

The standard way of achieving this is by using the DOS utility, FDISK, to create primary and secondary partitions. It is quite simple to use (you follow a series of prompts) but the problem is that it destroys all data on the hard disk. So unless you're starting from scratch with a new hard disk, it means backing up all your data and applications.

In practice you'll probably have to reinstall all the applications from scratch, as they will no longer fit onto (logical) drive C, and all shortcuts, registry entries and so on will no longer be correct. This is a dreary prospect, and if you reckon it's worth £50 or so not to have to do this, there's an application called Partition Magic which will create or resize partitions, including those for OS/2 and Windows NTFS, without



destroying data. I haven't actually tried it but I have heard good reports. (See "PCW Contacts", p???)

Spaced out

Yet another way is to use the Drivespace utility that comes with Windows 95. This has the tremendous advantage of being free, and easy to set up. Go to

"Accessories/ System Tools" from the start menu, and you should find it. If not, launch C:\WINDOWS\DRVSPACE from the Start Button "Run" command. You'll see a list of all your floppy and hard drives (or partitions).

It works rather like ZIP, in that it creates a single file on the partition that serves as a container for all files and folders. By compressing and decompressing the files as they are read from, and written to, the disk, it claims to save around 50 percent of disk real-estate. The program warns you that it could take several hours to compress the drive and you should back up data first.

Having created a compressed partition, it's completely transparent; it just appears as another drive. You can hide the "host" drive if you want to and adjust the compression level. Astute readers will notice that even without any compression, there's still a substantial saving, as the One Big File is never going to leave more than one unfilled cluster.

The real worry is security: if the One Big File gets corrupted, you're in One Big Heap of trouble. In mitigation, however, I would say that although I'm in the rare state of having enough hard disk space at present, I've used various brands of disk compression over seven years, and only once had a major disaster, which was probably my fault. In further mitigation, I'd say that you don't have to compress everything. You can keep irreplaceable data on an uncompressed partition.

Whose computer is this anyhow?

In the May edition of this column, we discussed how to change the user name and company of your PC, either by editing the registry or by using the "real man" method of a disk sector editor. That takes care of the "Help/About" box, but there's more, as Rick Mason kindly pointed out.

If you've bought a PC with Windows 95 pre-installed, you might well have more information in Control Panel System Properties. Typically, there will be a logo, the make and model of the PC and a helpful-looking button titled "Support Information". If you don't have this, but would like to or, like Rick, you bought your PC from the late, unlamented Escom and would rather forget about this, here's what to do. First, forget the Registry, as this is all in an old-fashioned .INI file. Then, find, or create with Notepad, a file in Windows\System, called OEMINFO.INI. Use your imagination and good taste to edit it accordingly — anything to the right of the equals sign is up to you:

```
[general]
Manufacturer=Crapola Corporation
Model=The Cheapest
[Support Information]
Line1=At that price you have to be joking
Line2=Figure it out for yourself
Line3=You can have up to ten lines of this
```

And now for the classy logo. Create a .BMP file in Paint or the bitmappy application of your choice. According to

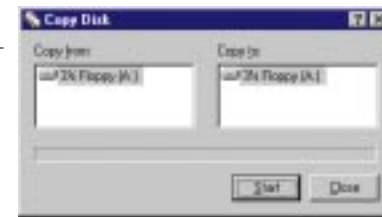
Cool tips

■ If you want to open Internet Explorer without connecting to the internet — to browse HTML files on your hard disk, or change the settings, say — and don't want the bother of cancelling the "Connect to..." dialog, create a shortcut to any HTML file on your PC. The BLANK.HTM file in the Windows folder does just fine.

■ You can create a shortcut not just to a document, but to any point in it. Highlight, for instance, a word or phrase in a WP document, then right-drag it out of the application window and on to a folder or the Desktop. Release and choose "Create document shortcut here". After you've saved and closed the document, double-clicking on the shortcut will re-open it at the chosen phrase — a great way of saving your place in a long document.

■ Floppy copy? Right click on the floppy drive in My Computer or Explorer, and lo, a "Copy Disk" option presents itself. Follow the prompt to change disks, but beware — you don't get warned that this will destroy all the data on the destination disk.

If you want to copy one or more files between floppies, without erasing the contents of the destination disk, then you might think the smart way is to right-click, "Copy", change disks, hit F5 to refresh the folder window, then right-click "Paste". But, no, it doesn't work with removable media, as the "Copy" command only stores the path and file name, not the contents. So when you change disks, it can't find the file. Instead, right-drag "Copy" to the Desktop (or any handy folder), change disks, then right-drag "Move" from the Desktop (the files should still be highlighted) to the destination disk.



Copying an entire floppy disk

Rick: "The maximum size is 180 (w) x 114 (h) pixels. BMPs do not have built-in transparency, like GIFs, but in this case transparency seems to be set by the colour of the second pixel from the left on the bottom row of the image." If you don't want to make your own, Rick continues: "Take a look at www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/3981/crap_pcs.htm to see the logo I use: it's a fictional company from BBC2's Red Dwarf, as should be obvious from the rest of the site."

Thank you, Rick. I am now the proud possessor of a Crapola and only have to right-click "My Computer" and choose "Properties" to be reminded of this.

Tiresome tildas...

In May's column we also considered a way of changing the default DOS short filename, so it truncated non-ambiguous filenames rather than using the ~n ending.

Alex Nicholls warns: "I did this a long time ago and also (manually) changed the short name of the 'Program Files' folder from 'PROGRA~1' to 'PROGRAMF'. It turns out that a lot of installation programs from Microsoft (notably Internet Explorer) insist not only on installing into Program Files, but work with the short form, in the PROGRA~1 version. So does the link from NotePad to call WordPad to edit a large file (although this can be adjusted in the registry). So the change can cause trouble and I find myself wishing I hadn't done it."

Iconoclasm

Alex Slack's icons have gone all funny... no, don't laugh, commiserate. "I was fiddling with virtual desktops when I found all my icons had been turned duller," writes Alex. "For example, white had turned to light grey and dark grey had turned to dark red, but it didn't affect any other Windows graphics. So far I've tried changing resolutions and colour depths, reinstalling the drivers which came with the card and the Windows default drivers, fiddling with colour spaces and gamma correction, but the problem remains. Even stranger is that icons that were put in after the problem, are fine."

There is a simple cure for this. You certainly shouldn't have to reinstall any drivers or fiddle with colour spaces (whatever they may be). If you've got TweakUI installed in Control Panel, then there's a "Repair" tab with a button to mend it. If you haven't got TweakUI (and you really should — it's part of the Powertoys collection and features regularly on our cover-mounted CD), open the Windows folder and delete the file named ShellIconcache. This file keeps all the icons used in one place to speed performance, and Windows will rebuild it in the fullness of time.

PCW Contacts

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