

## BYTES

A byte is pretty much like a character or letter in a word. The word sodium-free contains 11 bytes. (The hyphen counts as a byte.) Computer nerds picked up the metric system much more quickly than the rest of us, so bytes are measured in kilos (1,000), megas (1,000,000), and gigas (way huge).

A page of double-spaced text in Notepad is about 1,000 bytes, known as 1 kilobyte, which is often abbreviated as 1K. One thousand of those kilobytes is a megabyte, or 1MB. One thousand megabytes is a gigabyte, which brings us to your computer's sales slip: Most hard drives today are 2 gigabytes or larger.

- \* Just about all floppy disks these days can hold 1.44MB. Today's programs are huge, so they usually come on compact discs, which hold more than 600MB.
- \* All files are measured in bytes, regardless of whether they contain text. For example, that leafy forest background art some people put on their Windows 98 desktop takes up 66,146 bytes.
- \* A page of double-spaced text in Notepad takes up about 1K, but that same page in Microsoft Word consumes much more space. That's because Word sticks in lots more information: font size, the author's name, bookmarks, spell-check results, and just about anything else you can think of.
- \* The Windows Explorer or My Computer programs can tell you how many bytes each of your files consumes. (Hint for anxious users: Click the file's name with your right mouse button and choose P[r]operties from the menu that pops up; you find more information about a file than you want to know.)

One kilobyte doesn't really equal 1,000 bytes. That would be too easy. Instead, this byte stuff is based on the number two. One kilobyte is really 1,024 bytes, which is 2 raised to the 10th power...but enough of that techie talk for now.

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