

## What Is FAT32?

Many people may not care about the internal structure of the disk drive in their systems, except when it comes to running out of disk space. In the days of DOS, Windows 3.1 and Windows 95, you were forced to use a file system known as FAT (File Allocation Table). FAT file systems were only capable of recognizing drives of 523MB. In order to see any space on larger hard drives, you either had to run a disk management utility or partition the large drive into smaller areas for the system to use the remaining space above 523 MB. Even if you used a disk manager to see your 2BG hard drive, the organization of your file system would use 16K (that's 16,000) bytes of storage to store a file with only one character of text in it. The remaining 15,999 bytes were known as "Dead Space" or "Disk Slack"

New to Windows 98 is the FAT32 file system. This method of file system organization allows your system to see disk drives up to 4 Terabytes in size, and uses a cluster size of only 4K. Essentially, the new file system means more available disk space for you, and less wasted due to system limitation. FAT32 also runs much faster than FAT, giving you quick access to your data when you need it.

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Open Control Panel/System Properties and look under System. If it reads 4.00.950 B, you can convert to FAT32. There are two ways to convert to FAT32 under Win95: the free way and the easy way.

The free way: Move or back up all files off your hard drive. Use your Win95B Emergency Startup Disk to boot to DOS and run FDisk, where you "enable large disk support" and repartition your drive. After that you'll have to format the disk, reinstall Win95, restore your other files, and reinstall all your apps.

The easy way: Buy a product like PowerQuest's PartitionMagic, which can perform FAT32 conversion without damaging your data or requiring any reinstallation.

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Don't try to compress your disk after converting to FAT32. You have to choose either compression or FAT32-you can't do both. Chances are, you'll gain more space with old-fashioned FAT16 and disk compression. But you'll gain stability with FAT32. Take your pick.

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