Get more disk space -- for free

Running out of disk space on your XP machine? Don't rush to buy a new hard disk just yet. You may be able to increase the size of your existing hard disk in essence without spending a penny.

You can use the NTFS to compress files on your hard disk and gain back some space. XP will compress and decompress files on the fly; when you open a file, it automatically decompresses so that you can work with it. Then, when you save the file, it is automatically compressed.

First, you need to make sure you're using NTFS. If not, you can easily convert your hard disk to it. To see if you're using NTFS, go to Windows Explorer, right-click your C: drive and select Properties. On the General tab, look at the "File system" listing. If it says NTFS, you're all set. If it says FAT32, you'll need to convert from FAT32 to NTFS.

To convert your hard disk to NTFS, open a command prompt, and (assuming that your hard disk is C:), type this command:

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convert c: /fs:ntfs
```

Once you've done the conversion, you're ready to use compression.

You can compress your entire drive, or just individual files and folders. It does take a little longer to load and save files when they're compressed, though I haven't noticed a major difference. If you care about top performance, however, it's not a bad idea to do it on a folder-by-folder basis, at least to start with.

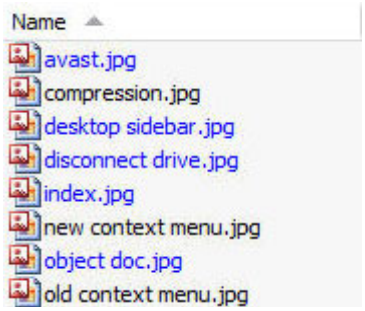
To compress an entire drive, right-click the drive in Windows Explorer, select Properties, and on the General tab check the box next to "Compress drive to save disk space," then click OK. You'll be asked to confirm that you want to do the compression, and XP will then go about compressing the drive.

Depending on the number of files and folders and your processor speed, the process can take up to several hours. You can still work while XP does the compression. But if you're working on a file that XP is about to compress, you'll be prompted to close it so XP can compress it.

Compressing an individual file or folder.

If you'd prefer to instead compress individual files or folders, right-click any file or folder from within Windows Explorer, select Properties, and on the General tab click the Advanced button. Check the box next to "Compress contents to save disk space," click OK, and then OK again when the Properties dialog box appears, and OK once more when the Confirm Attribute Changes box appears.

From now on, all compressed folders and files will show up in blue in Windows Explorer, so you can differentiate between them and uncompressed files.



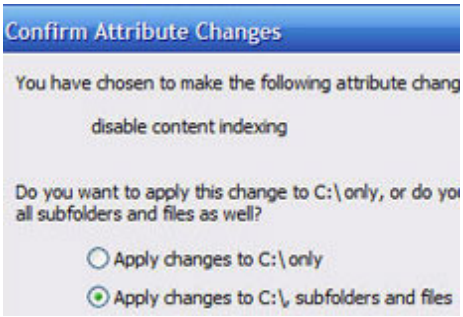
Files in blue are compressed; those in black are uncompressed.

How much space will compression save? That depends on the types of files you commonly use. I've found that TIFF graphic files are often compressed by 80% or more. My Microsoft Word 2003 files were shrunk by about 66%. Other formats, such as JPEG and PDF, hardly shrank at all.

You can easily check how much compression you've achieved on a file or folder. Right-click it in Windows Explorer, choose Properties and select the General tab. You'll see two listings for the file size, one titled Size, and the other "Size on disk." Size on disk is the compressed size, while Size is the original size of the file. (Note that this applies only to files and folders that have already been compressed.)

Turn off indexing to ease strain on system resources

XP's search uses an indexing system that speeds up the searching process. But it also uses up significant system resources, and uses plenty of hard-disk space. Unless you do a lot of searching, you'll be better off turning off indexing.



```
ERROR: stackunderflow
OFFENDING COMMAND: ~

STACK:
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