

[How to clean up your hard drive](#)

May 12th, 2009, 4:17 pm · [1 Comment](#) · posted by [Ed Schwartz, NOCCC](#)



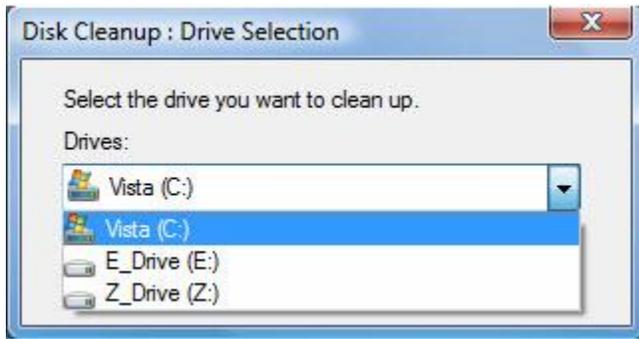
*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org. And don't forget to stop by the Gadgetress' home for the PC Club, at ocregister.com/link/pcclub, to find out how to ask a question and read past answers.*

QUESTION: When I click on "disk cleanup" it empties everything except "compress old files." Even though it is checked and highlighted, over two million bytes of information remain after it runs. Is there any way to empty "compress old files"?

PC Club: Before we get to the answer to your question, let's review why you should cleanup your hard drive periodically. Windows accumulates debris or what are known as temporary files for several reasons which can result in quite a bit of wasted hard drive space over time.

One source of these files is due to misbehaving programs or to program crashes. Another source is due to how your Internet browser functions. Each time you visit an Internet site, the page that you are viewing is downloaded to your hard drive and it resides there until it is removed. These are called temporary Internet files and also accumulate over time. These accumulated files can slow down your computer and should be removed periodically. One example is that when an anti-virus program scans your disk, it wastes a lot of time scanning these junk files in addition to everything else.

One way to cleanup your drive is to use the built-in "Disk Cleanup" tool. With Windows XP or Vista, go to "Start," then "All Programs," "Accessories," "System Tools," and then "Disk Cleanup." If you have more than one disk drive, you can choose the disk to cleanup by clicking the drop-down box. Normally, you will only have one drive, the C-Drive.



With Vista, you can either clean up just your files or all users' files. This is only helpful if more than one user has an account on the computer.

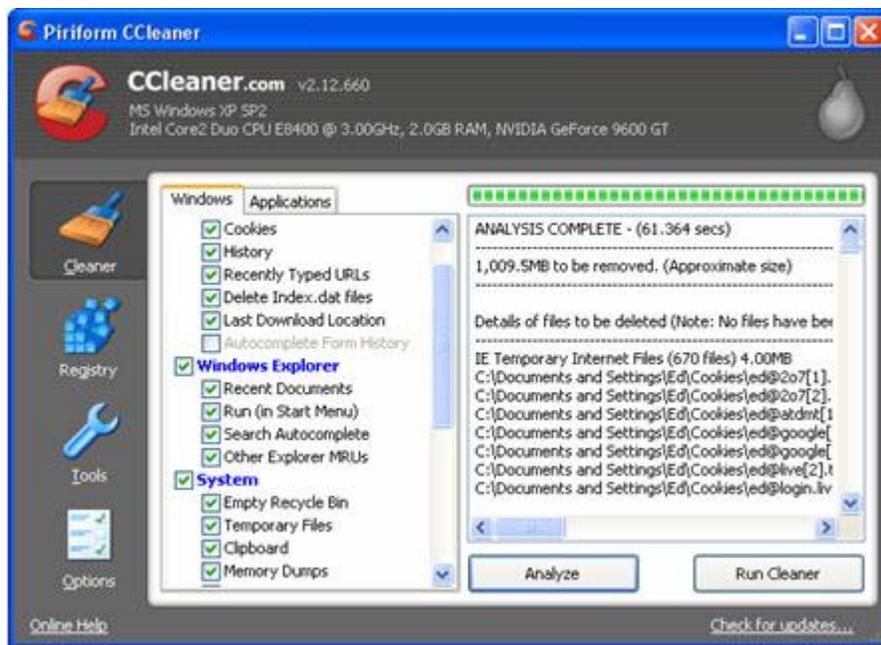
You can read more about XP's Disk Cleanup tool at support.microsoft.com/kb/310312, and Vista's version at bit.ly/g3WDf.

As for your question, the "Compress old files" feature doesn't actually delete any files from the drive. Instead, it compresses files that Windows hasn't accessed for a specified period of time thereby freeing up some space. In other words, this feature saves space on your computer by compressing files that haven't been recently used. You can specify this time by clicking the Option box. These files will still be available, but it will take a little longer to load because the files must be decompressed on the fly the next time you need them.

So the question is, "Is it worth it?" If you have ample free space on your hard drive I wouldn't bother. I would rather have a more responsive computer.

You can also cleanup just your temporary Internet files without using the "Disk Cleanup" tools by opening Internet Explorer and clicking "Tools," "Internet Options" and then the "Delete" button.

An even better way to cleanup your hard drive is to forgo the Windows tools and download the free CCleaner from www.ccleaner.com.



Just download it, install it and follow the instructions. When you launch the program you will see an “Analyze” button, which you click to run the program. When it is finished the analysis, you can click the “Run Cleaner” button.

In summary, I recommend leaving the “Compress old files” option unchecked if you continue to use the Windows tool and better yet, use CCleaner to do the job. - *Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his blog at www.edwardns.com/blog.*