(Approx. 435 words)

A Common Computer Problem and How to Fix It

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User Friendly, January 2022 issue

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Over the years, computer hard drives have gotten larger and larger. But programs and the other files we load onto our computers have also gotten larger and more numerous. Eventually, this often becomes a problem when one’s computer starts running slower or informs you that it just cannot hold anymore.

One way to deal with this problem is to free up space on the hard drive or SSD (solid-state drive). Use the built-in Disk Cleanup tool in Windows 10. Click on the Start menu. Choose All Programs—select Accessories, then System Tools. Click on Disk Cleanup. Under the Files to delete heading, choose which file types you want to remove. If you’re unsure which file types to get rid of, select each one in turn and read its description. When you’ve selected the file types to delete, click OK.

Another method to free up space is to manually go through your files and delete the many of them that you don’t need or want. Image (photos), audio (music), and video (audio and image) files can take up vast amounts of file space. How many photos of little Tommy or Grandma from your last birthday celebration do you need? I’ll bet you have many duplicates of virtually every shot. Delete the copies, at the least. Have music files on your computer that you never listen to? Again, delete ‘em. Now repeat this process with your vacation photos. Lots of old photos of your ex? Remember that song from the movie “South Pacific?” Wash those files right out of your computer.

Another trick here is to reduce the file size of those photos. Most cameras produced in the last several years take photos over two megabytes (MB) in size. Unless you plan to print those large file-size photos, you might think about reducing each image to between 200 and 400 kilobytes (KB). The reduced file size photos won’t look any different when you view them on your computer. One can even reduce the photo file sizes en masse. If taken on your iPhone, the phone will ask you what size you want the file to be when you send them, via email, to your computer. I use IrfanView, but several other programs do this.

Going through those extra, unneeded files can be laborious and time-consuming, but that might beat having to buy another computer, having a larger hard drive installed and having all the files transferred, or having your computer crash