

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

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We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

Full . . .

Suddenly, *Full* is a common problem. Several CCC members have bumped into *Full* with nasty results.

What is *Full*?

There are three kinds of *Full* that can cause you trouble: Full hard drive, Full back up disk and Full email server. In all three cases a limited, but critical, storage space has reached its limit.

Full hard drive.

Your Mac's hard drive is represented by the small icon that usually sits in the upper right corner of your *Desktop*.

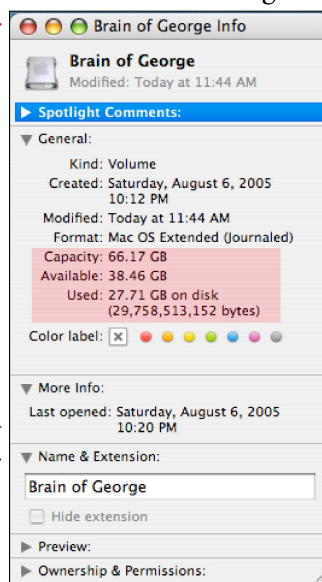
The hard drive is the place where all of your applications, music, documents, pictures, and other files are stored. Unless you are lucky enough to have more than one hard drive, this is where *everything* is.



Unfortunately, your Mac's hard drive has a limit to how many applications, documents, pictures, etc. it can safely store. So, give the hard drive icon one click to select it. Now, choose *Get Info* from the *File* menu. You will see a window that looks something like this

→ (my Mac's hard drive is named Brain of George. Unless you've renamed yours, it is probably named Macintosh HD.). I've highlighted in red, the information that we want from this window. Note

the amount listed as Capacity. Capacity is the maximum amount that your hard drive can hold (Brain of George can hold 66.17GB).



Note the amount shown as Used. This is how much stuff your hard drive is currently holding. We need to use a little math here. Divide the Used amount by the Capacity amount: $Used \div Capacity = \% \text{ used up}$. Here is how it works for my Brain of George: $27.71 \div 66.17 = .42$ showing that 42% of the capacity has been used up. (When you do the math, feel free to drop the decimal fractions from User and Capacity.) 42% is actually a little underused, so I have lots of room to add more stuff to Brain of George.

But, you may not. This percentage is your clue about how *Full* your hard drive is:

0% to 50% = Great. Maximum performance.

51% to 75% = Good. Tiny performance loss.

76% to 90% = OK. Noticeable performance loss. Approaching dangerous ground.

91% to 95% = Bad. Big performance loss. Potential file corruption. Fix this now!

96% to 100% = Guaranteed file corruption and/or loss. Crashes almost certain. Very delicate situation. Please contact me.

To fix it:

Fixing a full hard drive is as simple as trashing files. Trash unused applications, old emails, old installers, pictures, music and jokes that you don't really want to save. If that isn't enough, back up documents, pictures, music, movies, etc. that you want to save to another disk (CD, DVD, ZIP, external hard drive, etc.) and then trash the copies that are in your Mac's hard drive. When you are sure that you no longer want the trashed items, empty the Trash can and the space that these items were using becomes empty space again. Check *Get Info* on your hard drive and calculate the new percentage. If the new percentage is now less than 76% you are fine. Just remember to check occasionally to see if your hard drive is approaching *Full* again.

Full back up disk

If you use removable disks for back up (CD, DVD, ZIP, MO, floppy, etc.). You may

reach a point where the back up disk complains when you try to add more files to it. If your back up disk complains that it is full, you need to change your back up method. You could choose a larger capacity disk; perhaps DVD-R instead of CD-R (DVD-R disks can hold up to 4500MB of files, a CD-R only 650MB). Or, you could use several disks where one used to be enough.

The most certain way is to use an external hard drive that is at least the same size as your Mac's hard drive. No matter how full your Mac's hard drive gets, there will always be room on the back up drive. External hard drives also make it possible to easily automate your back ups so that you needn't worry about them again.

La Cie makes excellent external hard drives. I really like these:
<http://www.lacie.com/products/product.htm?pid=10655>

Full email server

This one can sneak up on you. Without you knowing it, your assigned space for email on your Internet Service Provider's (ISP) computers can fill up prompting nasty, scary notes from your ISP.

This is how email works. Your ISP (Comcast, AT&T, Earthlink, AOL, etc.)

has a special computer called an *Incoming Mail Server*. Comcast, for example, provides 250MB of space on their Incoming Mail Server. This space stores emails sent to you that you have *not* yet picked up. So as people send you email, the emails pile up in your space on the Incoming Mail Server. Here they wait until you open your email application (*Mail, Entourage, Outlook Express, AOL*) and it sends a signal to the Incoming Mail Server asking for your mail. When the Incoming Mail Server gets the request, it sends copies of the mail, that it is holding for you, to your email application. Your email application takes these copies and stores them in its email database. Your email application then sends a signal back to the Incoming Mail Server asking it to delete the copies that it has (since you received this mail, a copy on the Incoming Mail Server is redundant). That email is deleted and again you have lots of space on the Incoming Mail Server waiting to be filled with new incoming email.

Now, you can instruct your email application to *not* tell the Incoming Mail Server to delete mail that you have received. Or, you can tell your email application to instruct the Incoming Mail Server to leave received mail in

your space for a day, a week, or a month before deleting it. You can check to see this setting in your email application's Account Preferences.

When you get that nasty full message from your ISP it means that you have no space left on the Incoming Mail Server for new email. This means, at best, that no new mail can be received for you to pick up. At worst, you may also lose mail that you haven't yet picked up and your Incoming Mail Server space may become corrupted and stop working altogether.

The most common cause of a Full email server is Spam emails. It is wise to pick up, email daily to keep the Spam from overwhelming the Incoming Mail Server.

To fix it:

You could try to fix it yourself by using your ISP's web mail interface (if it has one), but you would probably be best served by calling your ISP's technical support and having them do the job of mucking out the Incoming Mail Server. They can also advise you of the most convenient incoming email removal setting for your account.

Please watch out for Full! If you need more information or help with *Full*, please contact CCC at 800-540-8989.

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auto club
for your
computer.