Windows – Cleanup Temporary Files

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All Operating Systems, including Windows, can get bogged down with temporary files. These are files used by the Operating System to speed up or simplify processes such as web browsing and performing updates. While these temporary files can be beneficial, not all are purged when the work is done. Due to this, it is a good idea to clean them up from time to time to ensure your computer performs optimally. Having too many temporary files on a system can cause slowdowns, low disk space and may lead to the computer being unstable. Windows does perform basic cleanup automatically, but many items can be missed and remain on your computer unless you take action to purge them.

The directions below are for Windows 10 though the process is very similar, if not identical, on other versions of Windows. You can clean up temporary files at any time, but it is rarely needed more than once every 2-3 months unless you are experiencing problems. The process typically completes in a few minutes, but may take longer. The time depends on many factors including the speed of your computer and amount of temporary data to purge. If you have not run this process previously it can take a while to complete, as there will likely be a large number of files to remove.

To ensure all temporary files are erased it is optimal to have all programs closed when following these steps. You can be working while the cleanup tool runs, but it is some temporary files will not purged if you do so.

**Important Note:** The steps below purge most temporary files including those used for Windows Updates. While rare, uninstalling an update is occasionally needed. Due to this, you may want to wait at least a week after installing Windows Updates before purging your temp files, unless you are experiencing issues with your computer.

1. Open the RUN dialog
   a. This can be done in many ways, but on many computers you can right-click the START button and then click RUN. You can also press the Windows Key and R on the keyboard at the same time.
2. Type the following in the RUN dialog and then click the OK button.
   
   CLEANMGR

3. After a few moments, the Disk Cleanup tool will appear and start scanning the C: drive.
4. In the new window, click the CLEAN UP SYSTEM FILES button.

5. A new window opens and another scan of the C: drive occurs.

6. In the next window, ensure all checkboxes are marked and then click the OK button.
   a. Make sure to scroll up and down to confirm all the checkboxes have been marked.
7. Click the DELETE FILES button at the confirmation prompt.

Are you sure you want to permanently delete these files?

A status dialog appears and once the cleanup is complete all windows automatically close.