

FRAGMENTATION

Understanding the problem of fragmentation

Fragmentation means that the pieces of a file are scattered all over the disk, making it difficult for the computer to access the file. The more pieces a file is in, the more difficult that file is to access. Also, when many files are fragmented, the computer will become much slower, making common tasks like opening e-mail and pictures take longer.

A good defragmentation program not only finds out how badly the files are fragmented, but it finds out how much your computer is slowed down because of it. Most importantly, most programs can eliminate the fragmentation on the volume, and keep it eliminated without you having to do anything.

Windows comes with a utility that allows you to "defragment" your hard drive. This utility is called "Disk Defragmenter" or "Defrag." Defrag runs about and rearranges files so that all the clusters associated with that file are placed next to each other. The next time you load that file all the data clusters are contiguous and the drive doesn't have to jump around the disk to read the various clusters.

Running Defrag is easy. Because defrag is doing disk writes, I recommend that you not run it with other programs active. Not that this will cause damage, but if defrag recognizes that data has changed, it will restart and take forever to run. Best to just wait and run it during a "calm" time.

Run Defrag in either of two ways: Click the start button, programs, accessories, system tools, and disk defragmenter; or click start, run and type in DEFRAG. Either method will yield the same results.

I run Defrag at least once a week, more if I have the spare time, and would suggest that it become one of your toolbox essentials.