

How to Completely Delete Any Windows File Using SDelete

To ensure that files are deleted permanently, you can use SDelete. This command line utility securely deletes data, making it unrecoverable.

Files deleted from your PC may still be recoverable, at least for a short time. To make sure they're gone forever, you can use SDelete. This command-line utility securely erases data, making it unrecoverable.

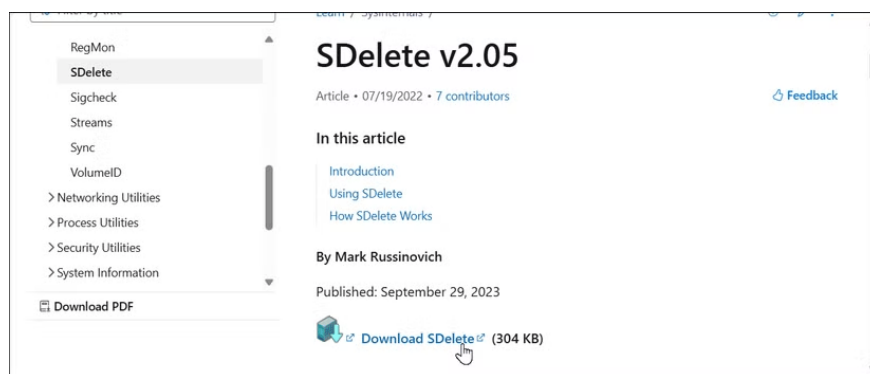
What is SDelete?

When you delete a file, your computer simply marks the space it occupied as unallocated. This means that until another application writes data into that space, the contents can be recovered using data recovery tools.

SDelete can ensure that deleted files cannot be recovered. This command-line utility not only deletes existing files, but also removes previously deleted data that remains in unallocated areas of the drive. It securely erases data using the DOD 5220.22-M strong data deletion standard, recommended by the U.S. Department of Defense. It works by overwriting file data on disk clusters.

How to install SDelete

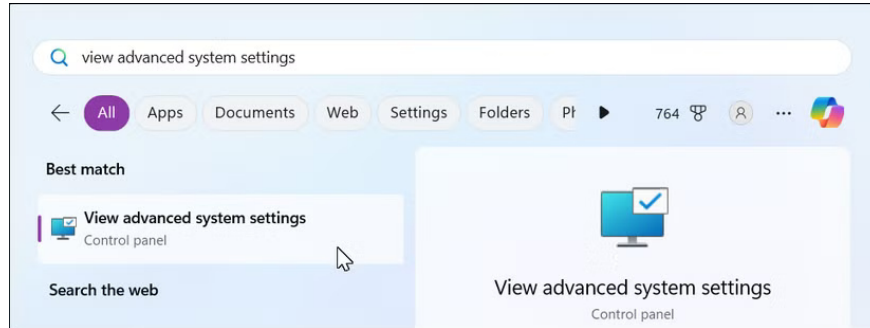
To get started, visit the Microsoft Sysinternals site. Click **Download SDelete** to save the compressed file to your local drive. Right-click the downloaded file, select **Extract All** , select a destination folder, and then click **Extract** .



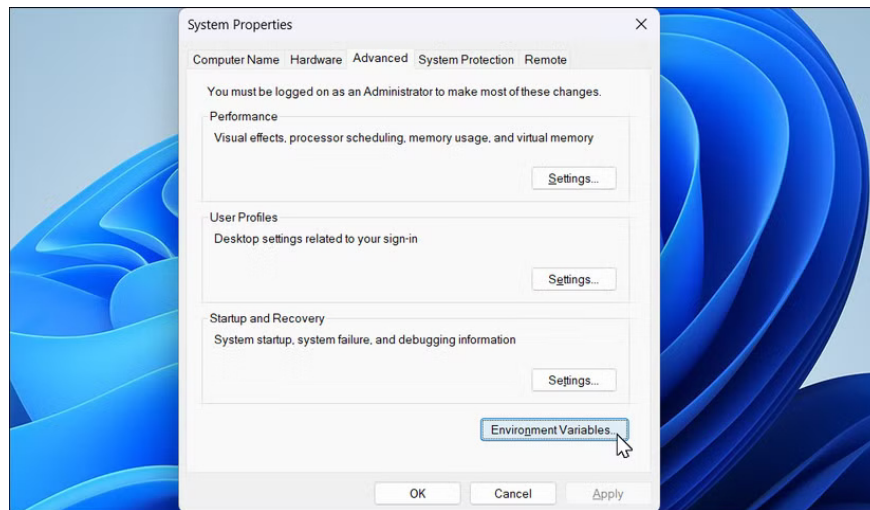
Since SDelete is a command-line utility, it does not work like a regular application with a graphical interface. To set it up, first move the unzipped SDelete folder into the **C:Program Files** folder . Once done, follow these

steps:

1. Click **Start** , type **view advanced system settings** and open the best match.

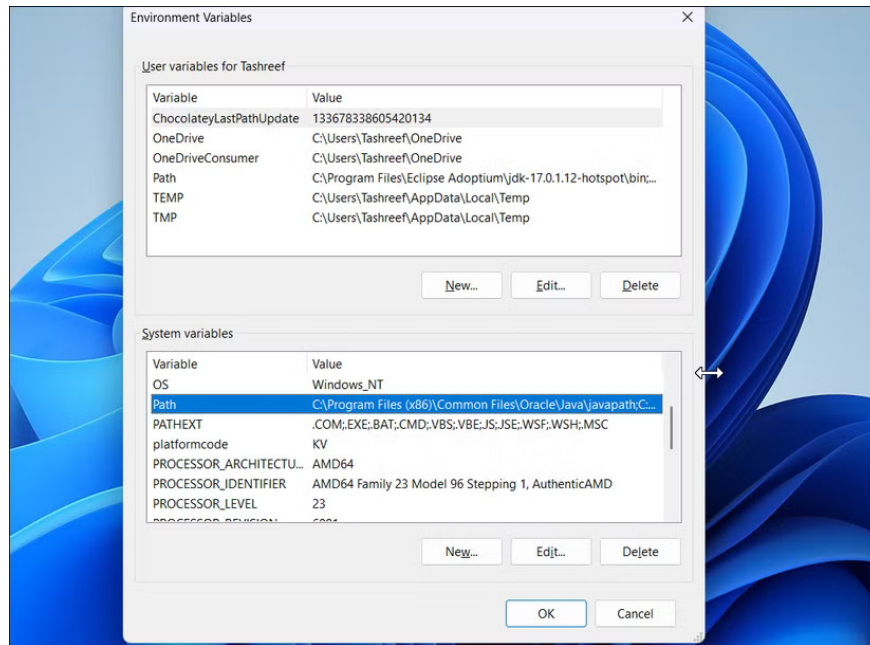


2. Select **Environment Variables** .



3. In **System variables** , select the **Path** line and choose **Edit** .

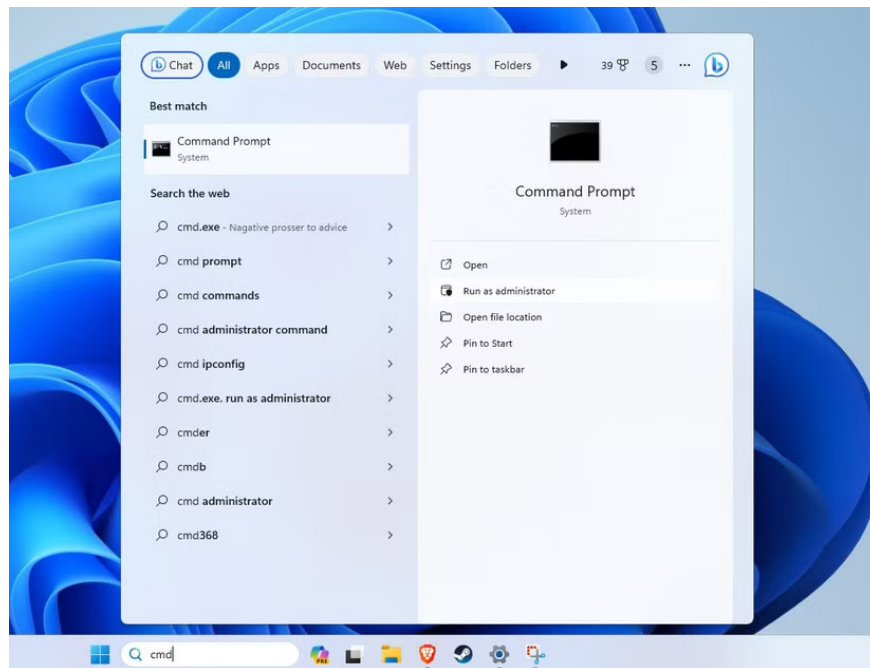
4. Select **New** to add a new line, then click **Browse** . Navigate to **C:Program Files** and select the **SDelete** folder .



5. Click **OK** on all open dialog boxes.

After configuring SDelete, launch the tool and see how it works.

1. Click **Start** , type **cmd** , right-click **Command Prompt** and select **Run as Administrator** .



2. Type **SDelete** and press **Enter** in the Command Prompt window to launch the tool. You will also see the **SDelete License Agreement** dialog box when the tool is run for the first time. Click **Agree** to close the dialog box.

```
Administrator: Command Prompt
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.22631.4317]
(c) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\Windows\System32>SDelete

SDelete v2.05 - Secure file delete
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usage: sdelete [-p passes] [-r] [-s] [-q] [-f] <file or directory [...]>
sdelete [-p passes] [-q] [-z[-c]] <drive letter [...]>
sdelete [-p passes] [-q] [-z[-c]] <physical disk number [...]>

-c      Clean free space.
-f      Force arguments containing only letters to be treated as a file/directory rather than a disk.
        Not required if the argument contains other characters (path separators or file extensions for example).
-p      Specifies number of overwrite passes (default is 1).
-q      Quiet mode.
-r      Remove Read-Only attribute.
-s      Recurse subdirectories.
-z      Zero free space (good for virtual disk optimization)
-nobanner Do not display the startup banner and copyright message.

Disks must not have any volumes in order to be cleaned.
For drive letters, include ":", for example "D:".

C:\Windows\System32>SDelete C:\Media\OneMP3.mp3

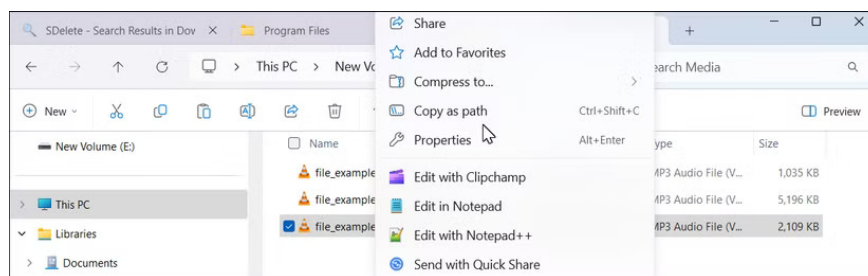
SDelete v2.05 - Secure file delete
```

How to use SDelete to delete files permanently

Before you begin, you should back up your data. Also, consider testing SDelete on a virtual machine first to minimize the risk of accidentally deleting important files. If you don't already have a virtual machine, you can easily set one up on a Windows PC for testing.

To get started, launch Command Prompt with admin privileges. In Command Prompt, type **SDelete** and press **Enter** to launch the tool. This will display a list of parameters and arguments that you can use with the SDelete command to securely delete files and free up disk space.

For this tutorial, we will be securely deleting an MP3 file located in the **C:\Media** folder . Open File Explorer, locate and right-click the MP3 file, then select **Copy as Path** to copy the full file path of that file.



Next, in the Command Prompt, type **SDelete** followed by the file path. For example, the full command would look like this:

```
SDelete C:\Media\OneMP3.mp3
```

```
Administrator: Command Prompt
For drive letters, include ":", for example "D:".

C:\Windows\System32>SDelete C:\Media\OneMP3.mp3

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SDelete is set for 1 pass.
C:\Media\OneMP3.mp3...deleted.

Files deleted: 1

C:\Windows\System32>w
```

Press **Enter** to execute the command. If successful, you will see the output:

```
Files deleted: 1
```

Next, try deleting the **Media** folder located in **C:** .

When deleting a directory, you need to include its subdirectories and handle any read-only attributes to ensure everything is cleaned up properly. To do this, use the SDelete command with the **-s** parameter to include subdirectories and **-r** to remove read-only attributes.

The full command would look like this:

```
SDelete -s -r C:Media
```

After running the command, the output will show the number of folders and files that have been deleted.

```
Administrator: Command Prompt

Files deleted: 1

C:\Windows\System32>SDelete -s -r C:\Media

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SDelete is set for 1 pass.
C:\Media\file_example_MP3_1MG (1).mp3...deleted.
C:\Media\file_example_MP3_1MG.mp3...deleted.

Files deleted: 2
Directories deleted: 1

C:\Windows\System32>
```

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