

How to fix errors cannot clean up Trash on Mac

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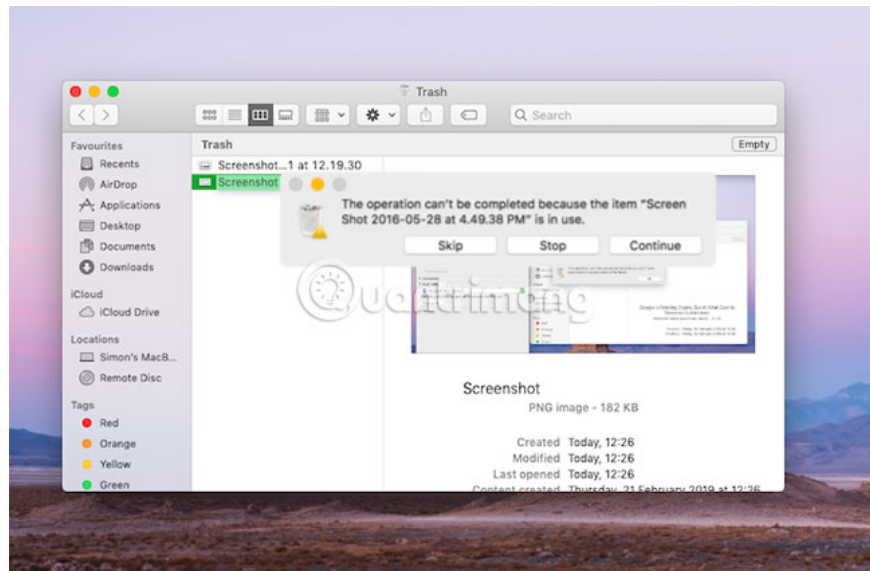
However, there are cases where Trash does not allow users to permanently delete certain files for various reasons.

This tutorial will show you how to deal with such cases. The article will show how to check if the file is being used or locked. The article will also look at how to perform disk repair in case there is a drive-related problem preventing the user from cleaning up the Trash. And finally, we will consider how to use Terminal to force Trash to clean up.

Cannot empty Trash on Mac? This is how to fix it

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How to clean up Trash on Mac when the file is still in use



Usually, Trash is not empty because certain internal files are still in use.

Another application, or some kind of process that works in the background, may be using them. Users will know this by a popup window that will indicate something like ' **The operation cannot be completed because the item is in use.** '(The operation has not been completed because this item is in use).

This means that users will have to close the file before it can be permanently deleted. For example, if the item is a Word document, the user will have to close it in Word. If it is an application, the user will have to exit the application.

Sometimes users may not be able to determine exactly where the file is opened. In these cases, perhaps a process running in the background is using it. To check if this is the case, restart your Mac and try to delete the file again. If a background process is using it, then this time the user will be able to delete the file in Trash.

How to fix problems using advanced files

In addition, a boot or log entry may be using the requested file to delete. Users can fix this by starting a Mac in Safe Mode. This prevents some software from starting automatically.

To boot the Mac in Safe Mode and clean up Trash, do the following:

1. Turn off the Mac.
2. Turn on the Mac and hold down the **Shift** key immediately.
3. Once booted into **Safe Mode**, open **Trash**.
4. Click the **Empty** button (in the upper right corner).

This will delete the file if the boot application is in use. If not, there is another option to use Terminal to check which application has the file locked. Do the following:

1. Open Trash.

2. Press **Cmd + Space** to launch Spotlight.
3. Enter **Terminal** and press **Return**.
4. Enter **lsdf** and press **Space**. This command will list open and display the list of files used with the processes that opened them.
5. Return to Trash and drag the file you want to delete into Terminal.
6. Press **Return** to run the command.

This command will give a list of applications that use the file.

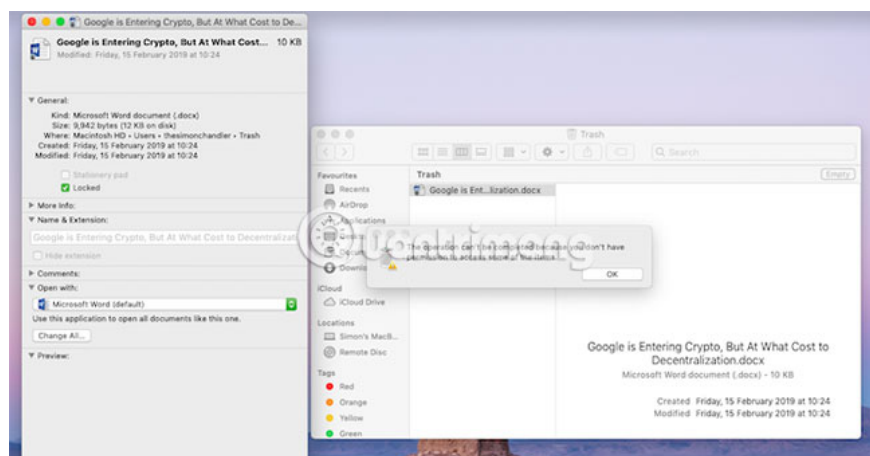
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Last login: Tue Feb 19 11:35:10 on ttys000
[Simons-MacBook-Air:~ thesimonchandler$ lsdf /Users/thesimonchandler/.Trash/The_First_ever_BTM_Payment_in_Real.docx
COMMAND  PID      USER      FD  TYPE  DEVICE  SIZE/OFF      NODE
NAME
Finder    307 thesimonchandler  24r  REG   1,4    128564  8602843826
/Users/thesimonchandler/.Trash/The_First_ever_BTM_Payment_in_Real.doc
x
Microsoft 1839 thesimonchandler  19u  REG   1,4    128564  8602843826
/Users/thesimonchandler/.Trash/The_First_ever_BTM_Payment_in_Real.doc
x
QuickLook 1856 thesimonchandler   3r  REG   1,4    128564  8602843826
/Users/thesimonchandler/.Trash/The_First_ever_BTM_Payment_in_Real.doc
x
QuickLook 1856 thesimonchandler   4r  REG   1,4    128564  8602843826
/Users/thesimonchandler/.Trash/The_First_ever_BTM_Payment_in_Real.doc
x
Simons-MacBook-Air:~ thesimonchandler$ █

```

Close all applications in the list above (note that the Terminal may not provide the full name of the application). For example, in the screenshot above, the Microsoft Word listing command is **Microsoft 1839** . Therefore, users may have to try to close a number of different applications.

How to clean up Trash when the file is locked

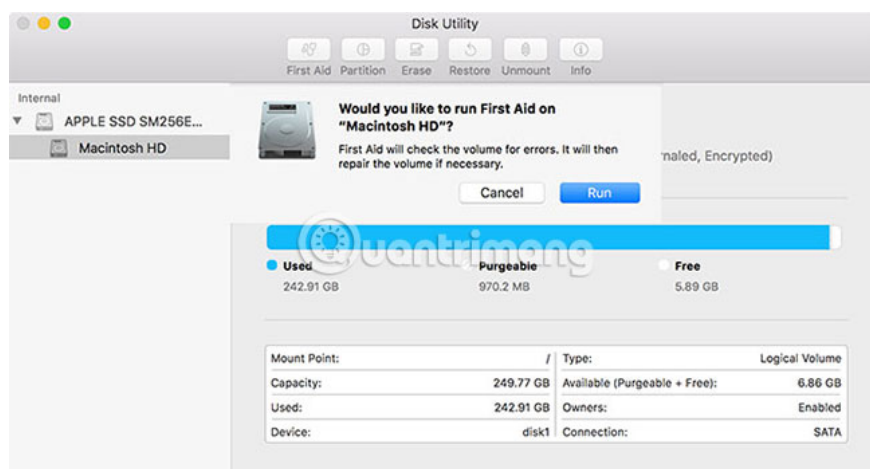


In other cases, files that are trying to delete may be locked. Users can easily fix this by going to Trash and unlocking them. Here's what to do:

1. Open Trash.
2. Right-click the file you want to delete.
3. Click **Get Info** .
4. Click the **Locked** checkbox .

The files will be unlocked and can be deleted by clicking the **Empty** button . In addition, the user can right-click the file and select **Delete Immediately**.

How to clean up Trash when there is a problem with the drive



The problem of hard drive failure can prevent Trash from being cleaned up. You can check the drive by launching Disk Utility and using the **First Aid** function .

Follow these instructions to complete the process:

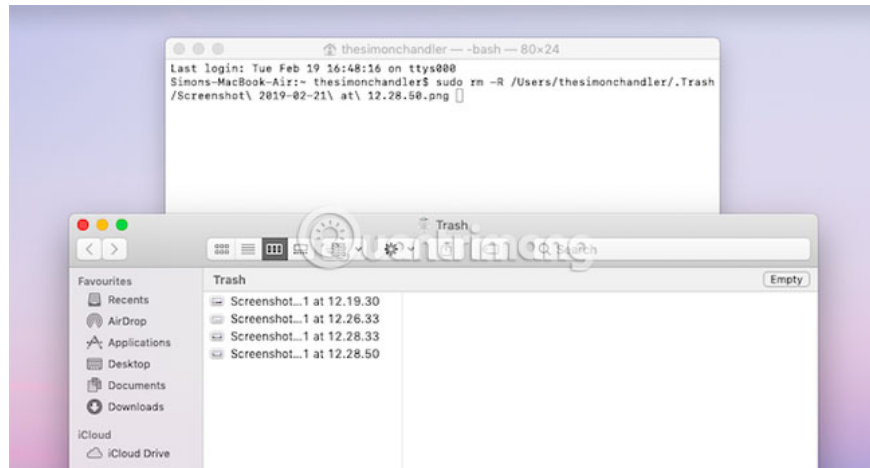
1. Press **Cmd + Space** to launch Spotlight.
2. Enter **Disk Utility** and press **Return**.
3. Select the hard drive name. Make sure the drive contains the file you want to delete.
4. Click **First Aid**, then select **Run**.

The First Aid function will indicate if it finds any errors, but it cannot fix the problem on the main drive while the drive is running. Users will need to restart the Mac in Recovery Mode to fix the problem on the boot drive.

Fixing a Mac drive is an option worth considering when something goes wrong and other steps don't work. In most cases, fixing the drive will allow to permanently delete items in Trash.

However, if the problem with the drive is not at the root of the problem, the user needs to force Trash to clean up.

How to force Trash to clean up



There are several ways to force Trash clean up. If a file is locked and can be unlocked, users can try deleting it while holding the **Option** key . Hold down the **Option** key while clicking the **Empty** button .

This is quite useful if the Mac doesn't allow any files to be unlocked.

One final option is to use the Terminal command to force Trash to be emptied. This option overrides any key on files and deletes files that are still in use. It also fixes any other errors that prevent Trash from being cleaned up.

Thus, using the Terminal command is an effective way to permanently delete files. However, it is possible that macOS is preventing users from deleting files for a good reason. Users can inadvertently give something important, make a certain application work, go to Trash.

Therefore, use caution when using the method described below:

1. Press **Cmd + Space** to open Spotlight.
2. Type **Terminal** and press **Return** to launch it.
3. Enter **sudo rm -R** and press **Space**. This is a command to force deleting files.
4. Return to Trash and drag the files you want to delete into the Terminal window.
5. Press **Return**.
6. Enter admin password to authorize the command. Password will not be displayed when user enters for security reasons.
7. Click **Return** to confirm and run the command.

This command will immediately delete the newly dragged file into the Terminal window. Finally, users can be assured that their Mac has been a bit 'cleaner'.

Trash cleanup is a good way to keep your Mac clean and free of clutter. It saves disk space and helps your Mac run more smoothly.

Hope you are succesful.

You finished reading the article "**How to fix errors cannot clean up Trash on Mac**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.