

How to Overwrite Deleted Data on a Drive in Windows 11/10

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When you delete a file or folder, the original data is not erased from the hard drive. Instead, the space on the drive that was occupied by the deleted data is de-allocated. Once de-allocated, the space becomes available for use when new data is written to the drive. Until the space is overwritten, you can recover the deleted data using a low-level disk editor or data recovery software.

When you encrypt a plain text file, the Encrypting File System (EFS) creates a backup copy of the file. This way, your data won't be lost if something goes wrong during the encryption process. Once the encryption is complete, the backup copy is deleted. Like any other deleted file, the data won't be deleted until it's overwritten.

The Cipher.exe command will delete data from available unused disk space on the entire volume. Data not allocated to a file or directory will be overwritten. The data will be deleted permanently. It may take a long time if you are overwriting a large amount of space.

You can use the Cipher.exe command to manually overwrite (securely erase) deleted data on the drive on demand.

Note : You must be logged in with admin rights to use the cipher command.

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How to do it:

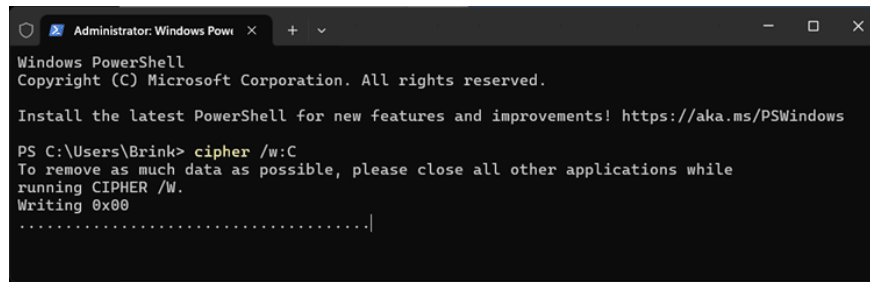
1. Open Windows Terminal (Admin) and select Windows PowerShell or Command Prompt.
2. Type the command below into Windows Terminal (Admin) and press **Enter**.

```
cipher /w:
```

Replace in the above command with the actual letter (e.g. "C") of the drive on which you want to overwrite all the freed space.

For example:

```
cipher /w:C
```



```
Administrator: Windows Powe x + v
Windows PowerShell
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Install the latest PowerShell for new features and improvements! https://aka.ms/PSWindows

PS C:\Users\Brink> cipher /w:C
To remove as much data as possible, please close all other applications while
running CIPHER /W.
Writing 0x00
.....|
```

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