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It's always fun looking back at old PC ads, right? Back when 48KB of RAM was a huge deal, or when a 450MHz processor was the norm, or when 10MB of storage space was more than anyone expected to fill in a lifetime. Nowadays I have multiple terabytes of storage capacity...and it just keeps filling up. It's all video games. One of 2016's large-scale PC gaming trends—emphasis on large—was the rapid inflation of download sizes and drive footprints. It's becoming a problem, and one that's fast putting PC gaming out of reach for some people. Let's dig into why before examining some potential solutions. Breaking the 50GB barrier Seagate Barracuda Pro 10TB This 10TB drive is truly vast and stupendously fast (for a hard drive), and is also miserly on the power consumption. All in all, it's the best consumer 3.5-inch internal hard drive we've ever tested by a long shot. I love our all-digital future. I really do. Moving to Steam and away from traditional retail channels has enabled a much more diverse games industry—releases as small and meditative as Sorcery! or as gun-happy as the Doom reboot. It's allowed for the revival of long-dead genres like the isometric CRPG, leaving us with Wasteland 2 and Divinity: Original Sin and Pillars of Eternity. It's given us back the B-games, the middle of the market I thought died with THQ—games like Shadow Warrior 2 and Obduction, too big to feel "indie" in the traditional sense but still comparatively small when put up against games from Ubisoft and EA. And if I contrast the size of my Steam library with my not-so-huge apartment...well, I'm pretty grateful my games don't take up physical space nowadays. I'd be drowning in jewel cases. 2016 gave way to some truly massive releases though—and again, I'm talking massive in terms of hard drive footprint, not marketing dollars or shelf presence or whatever. The largest I've seen: The double-packed Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare and Modern Warfare Remastered. Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare - 75GB so you can be bored by this guy for six hours. Want to take a guess at how much space the pair requires? Brace yourself and brace your hard drive, because it's 120GB. Yes, over 100GB of space to install the pair, with Infinite Warfare taking up 75GB of that all by itself. Just to break that down into more concrete terms: If the PC version of Infinite Warfare were released during the Xbox 360 era, it would've required approximately ten DVDs to hold all that data. Even with Blu-ray, you'd need two dual-layer discs for Infinite Warfare alone. Others aren't far behind. Gears of War 4? 73GB. Forza Horizon 3? 50GB. The aforementioned Doom? 65GB. Hitman? Also sitting at 65GB now that its first season is complete. Doom There's a reason games take up this much space, and we have only ourselves to blame for demanding ever-increasing fidelity. High-resolution textures and uncompressed audio are storage hogs. But it still stings a bit, when a few years ago the biggest games topped out at around 30GB—and even that was a rarity. When Titanfall hit 50GB back in 2014, it literally made headlines. Respawn had to come out and explain why it was that large. (All that uncompressed audio!) Now it's commonplace—and also a bit baffling. Solid-state drives are getting cheaper every week it seems, but that space still comes at a premium. Most people I know are running—at most—a 500GB SSD. Factor in your OS install and a few programs and you've only got enough room for four or five of these massive games. Crazy. The original Titanfall made headlines in 2014 for its 50 GB install. More important, and more pressing, is the fact that it's simply not feasible for many people to download 50GB of data a couple times a month. I'm blessed with an excellent Internet connection here in San Francisco, but my colleague Brad Chacos doesn't have quite the same luck in New Hampshire, nor do most people in the United States. A 50GB-plus game install could tie up your bandwidth all day, or maybe multiple days. The situation is even worse if you have a data cap to contend with—a reality now for many in the United States, thanks to Comcast's recent "Oh gee, only one percent of our users need a terabyte of data per month" lockdown. I bet a good chunk of that one percent plays and installs a lot of video games. Even if you only install a single game each month, you're talking maybe 60GB to 70GB for the game itself, then another few GB for those day one patches and probably some multiplayer matches. There's nearly a tenth of your monthly 1TB usage, gone. But why? What irks me is that for many people, these supersized installs are completely unnecessary. EVGA GeForce GTX 1060 GAMING (Single Fan) Sure, there are edge cases where performance might be better with uncompressed audio or textures (that was Titanfall's argument), but by and large it's for enthusiasts with high-end hardware. If you're running a game on a single GeForce GTX 1060, do you really need assets designed for 4K? Probably not. If you're playing in English, do you need to install uncompressed audio for a dozen other languages? Nein. And if you only ever plan to play singleplayer, do you need all of the multiplayer stuff too? Though it's largely completed on the PC, the weird transition period between physical and digital media has left us with some troublesome baggage—namely, that we still package games as if they were being pressed to disc, and everything needs to be included in the box. A better model is readily apparent. Software already uses it, and has for years. When you go to install Microsoft's Visual Studio, for instance, you're given a long list of files you may or may not need. Mark the ones you want, ignore the rest, and save yourself some drive space. Visual Studio Pretty standard, right? So why not in games? Oh, we're just starting to see this modular approach taken in video games. Shadow of Mordor, for instance, allowed players to install the oversized "HD Content" pack if they had enough VRAM to make higher-res textures viable. Fallout 4 is doing the same, with its recently announced 58GB (58GB!) high-resolution texture pack being offer as an optional add-on. Steam Call of Duty—of all things—has decoupled its singleplayer and multiplayer portions ever since Modern Warfare II. If you own any of the games in Steam you'll notice, for example, separate entries for Call of Duty: Black Ops II, Call of Duty: Black Ops II - Multiplayer, and Call of Duty: Black Ops II - Zombies. That method was unwieldy and left my Steam library a mess, but it's even cleaner now. Call of Duty: Black Ops III and Infinite Warfare simply listed their singleplayer and multiplayer modules as DLC, so you can uninstall it the same as any other add-on. Steam I'm not saying these are the only—or even the best—solutions. But I offer them up to hopefully get us talking about this issue before it gets worse. The games industry needs to ease the burden of these gargantuan installations. Let the people who want (and can handle) 80GB downloads continue as normal, but the flexibility of the PC as a platform should mean there's a way for people who don't need the whole package to pick and choose, be it by accepting downgraded assets or by installing only one mode at a time, or whatever else developers can think up. The data-capped masses will thank you for it, developers—as will our poor SSDs. Note: When you purchase something after clicking links in our articles, we may earn a small commission. Read our affiliate link policy for more details. As the battle over backwards compatibility rages between Xbox One and PS4, the PC looks on at this tribal console scuffle with detached amusement. The option to dust off and boot up old games has always been a perk of the Windows platform, making the idea of 'backwards compatibility' virtually non-existent. Yesteryear's games should just work.But, as Windows modernises to match the demands of recent games, running your Ultimas, Theme Hospitals and other retro titles can get tricky. So, for TechRadar's PC Gaming Week 2020, we've gathered the best ways to get your old PC games back on their feet in Windows 10, and in better shape than ever before.How to Run DOS Games in Windows 10It's been aeons since Windows ran through the DOS prompt, which is a problem for many games from the '90s that are designed for the ancient command-line interface. That's where DOSBox comes in.DOSBox is a DOS emulator that's so vital to running DOS-era games on modern PCs that DRM-free game retailer GOG.com (the best legal source for old games) integrates it with all the games in its store.If you have a DOS game installed, you can just drag and drop its executable icon (it's usually a '.exe' or '.bat' file) over the DOSBox icon, and you're away. If you don't want to go through this drag-and-drop process each time, you can create a shortcut for your game that automatically runs it in DOSBox.First, download and install DOSBox, then create a shortcut to the DOSBox executable (right-click DOSBox and select 'Create shortcut'). Move your newly-created shortcut to where you want to open your game from. Next, right-click the shortcut, click 'Properties', then the 'Shortcut' tab, then in the 'Target' box (leaving a space after the existing text) type the full directory path of your game's executable file in quotes.So to run Sid Meier's Civilization, the full text in the Target box would read "C:\Program Files (x86)\DOSBox-0.74\DOSBox.exe" -userconf "D:\Downloads\Sid-Meiers-Civilization DOS EN\CIV.exe" Click 'OK', rename the DOSBox shortcut to the name of your game (you can also change the icon picture in the 'Properties' window), and your game is ready to run. How to Install Old CD-ROM Games If you have a DOS game on CD-ROM, don't add it to your kitschy CD wall mirror just yet, because you can install it using DOSBox. To install a DOS-based CD-ROM game, first create the folder in Windows where you'd like to install it (we'll use 'c:\DOSGames' as an example), then enter the following command into DOSBox: mount c c:\DOSGamesNext, you'll need to mount your CD drive to DOSBox. Assuming this is drive 'd' on your PC, the command you need to enter into DOSBox is:Mount d d:\-t cdrom -ioctlWith your CD drive now mounted in DOSBox, change the active drive in DOSBox to the CD drive by entering the command 'D'. On the next line, enter the command corresponding to the game installer on the CD (you may need to open the CD in File Explorer to check this, but it's usually 'install', 'setup' or 'dos4gw'). So, your command line should look something like:Z:\>D: D:\>installFinally, follow the installer instructions to install your game.If your CD-based game is made to run with an older version of Windows, things get a bit more complicated, because old Windows installers (particularly from the 'XP' era and back) often aren't compatible with modern Windows versions (as a sidenote: the few CD-based games using the SecuROM DRM won't work in Windows 10 either. You can find a comprehensive list of these games here).One possible solution is to run the installer as an administrator (see below). If you're really desperate, you could run an older version of Windows in a Virtual Machine and install the game through that. In this scenario however, we'd probably recommend just buying a digital version of the game instead, which is at the very least guaranteed to install on Windows 10. If you then have trouble actually running the game, the following tips should help.Compatibility modes and Admin privilegesThe first thing to try if your old game isn't running in Windows 10 is to run it as an administrator.Windows 10 has more stringent security than Windows XP, so if your game was released in 2001 or thereabouts, it may fall foul of this. The easiest workaround is to right-click the game's executable and click 'Run as administrator'.If that fails, it's time to play around with the compatibility modes, which use a process called shimming to trick applications into thinking they're running on a different Windows version. Right-click the game executable, click 'Properties', then click the 'Compatibility' tab and tick the 'Run this program in compatibility mode' checkbox.In the drop-down menu beneath that, select the Windows version that corresponds to the year in which your game was released. Gothic II, for instance, came out in 2002, so that's why we chose Windows XP (Service Pack 3).Open-source versions and community patchesIf you've installed an old game from a CD, or even bought it from an online retailer, you may have been faced with such horror scenarios as being capped to 1024 x 768 resolutions, graphical oddities, or the game outright not working. This particularly applies to post-DOS games from around the turn of the millennium, with 3D graphics designed to run on hardware and APIs that are virtually unrecognisable from those used today.To make your old game work in Windows 10, and benefit from modern conveniences like HD resolutions, unlocked framerates, DirectX support and so on, you should check to see if there are open-source versions or community patches available for it.For example, you can download fully functional, open-source versions of classics like Command & Conquer: Red Alert (OpenRA) and Theme Hospital (CorsixTH), complete with high resolutions, and modern, redesigned UIs. Classic-yet-creaking games from the noughties, meanwhile, such as Gothic II, Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines and Arx Fatalis (anyone?) have been fixed and improved by years-long community patch projects.Just look at how nice Gothic II looks running in DirectX 11 at 1080p, with dynamic lighting and shadows, and vast draw distances (follow these instructions if you want to achieve the same effect).Here too are the links to the Vampire: The Masquerade unofficial patch and a much-improved open-source version of Arx Fatalis, which contain years worth of bug fixes and technical improvements that modernise their respective games.These are just specific examples, of course, but the point is that even obscure old games often have communities that are zealous enough to keep these games updated and alive. If a group of modders love John Romero's seminal flop Daikatana enough to patch it for modern systems (yes, this is actually a thing), there's a good chance your beloved old game has received similar treatment. So, do some searches for '[your game name] unofficial patch' and '[your game name] community patch', and see what you can find. Happy hunting.TechRadar's PC Gaming Week 2020 is celebrating the most powerful gaming platform on Earth with articles, interviews and essential buying guides that showcase how diverse, imaginative, and remarkable PC games – and gamers – can be. Visit our PC Gaming Week 2020 page to see all our coverage in one place.

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