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Mac: storage is full and what is System Data

A message saying your startup disc is almost full can stop updates and slow your Mac. System Data is one of the biggest mysteries on the storage screen, so this guide explains it and shows how to free space safely.

See what is using the space

Open the **Apple menu**, then **System Settings**, **General** and **Storage**. On older versions, choose the Apple menu, **About This Mac**, then **Storage** and **Manage**. Wait a moment for the coloured bar to fill in.

What is System Data?

System Data is a mix of things macOS needs: temporary files, caches, logs, and some other items that Apple does not sort into other groups. It can grow to be quite large. It is normal for it to take a share of the space. It is not something you should try to delete by hand, because removing the wrong files can stop your Mac working.

Safe ways to free up space

1. Empty the **Trash**. Right-click the Trash icon in the Dock and choose **Empty Trash**.
2. Open your **Downloads** folder and delete old installers and files you do not need.
3. In the Storage screen, look at the recommendations from Apple, such as **Store in iCloud** or **Empty Trash Automatically**. Read each one before turning it on.
4. Delete apps you no longer use from the **Applications** folder.
5. Move large photos and videos to an external drive. Check they open from the drive before deleting the originals.

Restart

System Data often shrinks after a restart, because temporary files are cleared. Restart, then look at the Storage screen again.

Avoid cleaning apps

Be careful with free clean-up apps or tools that promise to clear System Data. Some delete the wrong things and some are scams. If you are unsure, ask us first.

When to get more help

Contact us if System Data stays huge (for example over 100 GB) after a restart, if your Mac keeps saying the disc is full, or if you are unsure what is safe to delete. Back up your Mac before any big clear-out.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.