How to delete a file with a path too long to be deleted [duplicate]

Asked 6 years, 5 months ago   Active 2 years, 1 month ago   Viewed 572k times

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This question already has answers here:

How to delete directories with path/names too long for normal delete (23 answers)

How to delete a file in Windows with a too long filename? [duplicate] (8 answers)
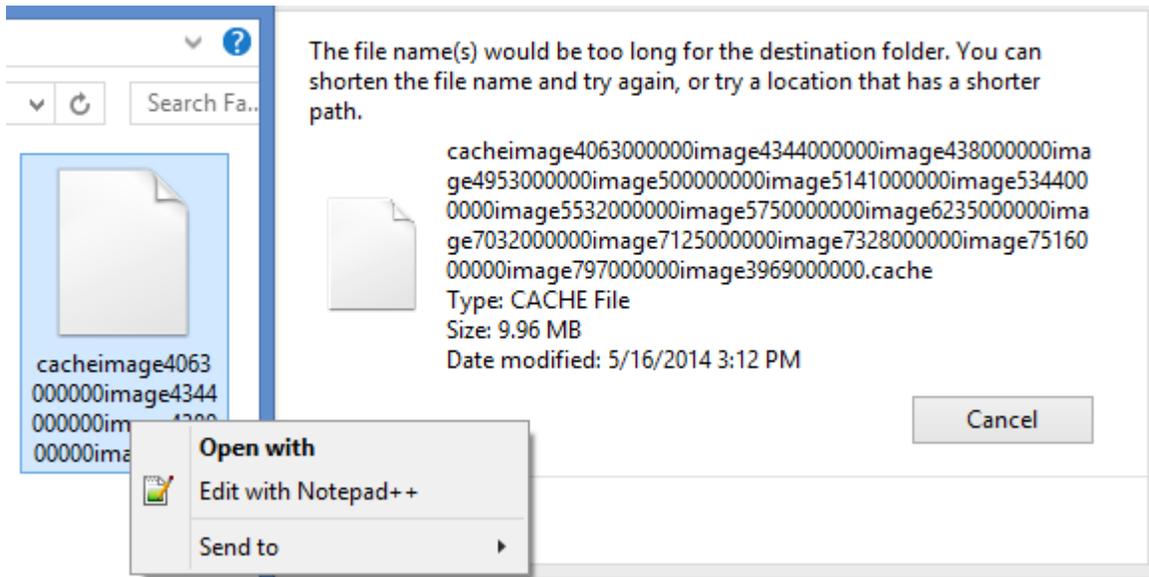
Closed 6 years ago.

I was working with some computer vision source code I found and didn't realize that it creates a cache file that has a VERY LONG name and now I can't delete the 2 of them.

I tried to rename it to a shorter name but I can't do anything to the file, I also tried to restart my computer and see if it would just go away.

The error message says:

> Destination Path Too Long.
>
> The file name(s) would be too long for the destination folder. You can shorten file name and try again, or try a location that has a shorter path.

How can I delete the files in this case?

windows-8   filenames

edited Jun 12 at 13:48	asked May 16 '14 at 20:09
Community ♦ 1	Chris **2,261** 3 9 6

Would it work from the command line with the `del` command? Something along the lines of `del *.cache` should delete all .cache files in the current directory. – Ryan May 16 '14 at 20:14

"Path\to\folder\CACHEI~ The system could not find the file specified" said that twice and there's 2 files in there but didn't do anything – Chris May 16 '14 at 20:17 ✎

On second thought, you could check one of the other questions that has already been answered. This one for example. – Ryan May 16 '14 at 20:18

1   If these two files are the only ones left in the directory, then you may have better luck deleting the entire directory. From the command prompt, try `rd /s directoryname` This will wipe out `directoryname` and all files/subdirectories within it, so use it with caution :) – bitsmack May 16 '14 at 20:22

1   youtube.com/watch?v=qQTyTprFAOg – bhv Oct 8 '14 at 4:34

4 Answers

Active	Oldest	Votes

3/27/2021 this worked, not the mapping

Assuming you are on windows:

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What I always do is use subst to create a drive letter association with part of the path.

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Then go to the new drive letter and navigate to the files that have long names. You should now be able to rename/delete/etc them. The reason this works is because the path itself is no longer

To create a subst folder

1. Start a command prompt (no admin privileges needed)

2. Use `cd` to navigate to the folder you want to go (you can use tab to autocomplete names

3. type `subst j: .` to create the driveletter association. (instead of the . you can also type the entire path)

4. Now in Explorer, you have a new drive letter in **This PC**. Go to it and do whatever you need to do to the .cache files.

5. Return to your cmd window and type `subst /d j:` to remove the drive or alternatively, restart your pc.

EDIT: A trick I learned which can shorten this quite a bit. From the Explorer window where you have trouble, click the address bar so you can type in it, then type `cmd` and press Enter to start a command prompt at that location, then proceed at step 3. :)

EDIT2: Okay, this trick can be expanded even further. If you are in explorer at the right path, just type in `subst j: .` in the address bar and press enter. A command window will pop up, execute the command and close again, and there you go, a new drive pops up in explorer.

	edited Aug 31 '18 at 21:30			answered May 16 '14 at 20:20		
	K7AAY				**LPChip**	
	8,717	4	25	57	**46.2k**	5	72	106

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27 robocopy empty_dir base_nested_dir /purge -- Just create an empty directory, and tell robocopy to purge everything in the target directory which isn't in the empty directory stackoverflow.com/a/3320317/588759 – rofrol Oct 30 '14 at 8:54

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7 Just tried this and i could not remove the file in question.. I use cygwin with windows, an alternative solution is to remove the file that way: rm -R /path/in/question as long as no other program is using the file you are good to go – John Mar 3 '15 at 17:28

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1 I had an issue where SUBST didn't recognise J: as a parameter (it also didn't see any virtual drives that were available) so the cygwin option mentioned by John worked well. – Tisch Apr 1 '15 at 12:40

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1 @rofrol, you should make your robocopy comment an answer: it is far easier than doing the directory names approach when dealing with lots of child directories (like those created in `node_modules`) – Andy Brown May 18 '15 at 19:50

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1 John's solution worked very well for me, just added the -f (force parameter): rm -R -f /pathToDelete – Christophe Keller Aug 13 '15 at 9:32

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Your question asks how to delete a file when the filename itself is too long. If the path is too long and not just the filename itself, you can easily just rename the folders to make the path shorter.

But to delete a file whose name is more than 255 characters:

- Use the command DIR /X which will display the short names of files.

- Delete using the short name.

i.e. if the file is named "verylongfilename.fil", the shortname will display as something like "verylo~1.fil" and you can delete using that name.

Please note that although Windows itself can handle paths far longer than 255 characters, most of the GUI -- like Windows Explorer -- is bound by the shorter limit.

answered May 17 '14 at 6:31

Debra
4,090   1   14   22

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16   This is a better answer than the accepted on. – Ben Jan 16 '15 at 21:06

3   The chosen answer is better because you can delete whole folders with that method – mcont May 28 '15 at 19:08

2   but in windows 7 seems that DIR /x doesnt change any display at all here... :(– gumuruh Apr 30 '16 at 17:16

4   Some NTFS filesystems do NOT have 8.3 equivalents. So this doesn't always work anymore. – Ross Presser Dec 31 '16 at 18:52

     Del /S from CMD worked for me even with large name on 8. – Jeff Nov 27 '17 at 18:34

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Googled: delete long filename First result

Use Unlocker http://www.filehippo.com/download_unlocker/

Cannot delete folder: It is being used by another person or program Cannot delete file: Access is denied There has been a sharing violation. The source or destination file may be in use. The file is in use by another program or user. Make sure the disk is not full or write-protected and that the file is not currently in use.

Unlocker can help! Simply right-click the folder or file and select Unlocker. If the folder or file is locked, a window listing of lockers will appear. Simply click Unlock All and you are done!

answered May 16 '14 at 20:18

Wutnaut
714   3   15

at all - been using it for years and it's a very useful utility. In the case of a file or folder whose path is too long it will find no locking handle but should offer the Delete option in the drop down afterwards. – Steve Pettifer Jan 12 '15 at 14:55

1   Worked flawlessly - funny thing is I have this software installed but didn't occurred to me to use it in this situation. – Daniel Sokolowski Jan 3 '16 at 1:27

Didn't work for another folder where I copied a circular junction folder, but what did work was renaming each level folder to one character like 1 all the way and then deleting it. – Daniel Sokolowski Jan 3 '16 at 1:39

This was the only answer that worked for me (I'm using windows 10). Thank you very much! – user26832 Jul 12 '16 at 2:49

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Microsoft has a [useful knowledge base article on deleting undeletable files](#). Cause #4 is of relevance to you.

Your best bet would probably be to map a drive to the folder that file is in (resolution #3), then enter in through that drive and delete it.

answered May 16 '14 at 20:18

Compro01
226   1   4

1   I never realized before that I could "map network drive" to a location on my own hard drive. That's what I did in Windows Explorer. After navigating to the drive, I could easily delete the folder & contents. Same principle as the console solutions shown above, but this is a quick GUI solution that was easier for me. – RandomHandle Jun 16 '16 at 0:47

I love "Resolution 5: Use a tool that can traverse deep paths", how ironic. Windows tools can't do it so you can also install something like cygwin to do it. There are probably other windows consoles that are able to traverse long file paths. – Craig Jan 16 at 15:28