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This image has been lost some time after publishing, but you can still view it here. If I let it, my hard drive would fill capacity with crap I don't need. Over the course of a day I get my feet on all sorts of throwaway files: videos, photos and songs meant for a single view or listen, my PDF must print, install software and big ol' zip files I extract and do whatever I need with the content. The end result is a series of tools hogging the space on my hard drive for no good reason. I'm lazy and I don't want to have to clean up after myself every time I work with a set of files. Instead, I planned a cleanup scenario that swept through my hard drive every night while I slept. My virtual gatekeeper deletes any temporary files that have sat around for more than x days, just as the old garbage begins to stink. This way the space on my hard drive is constantly recovering, and I don't have to worry about scaring low disk space messages at the critical moment I'm about to conceive my opus. Because you know if you're going to run out of disk space, that's when it happens. Today I present that janitor script and its exact use, so you can also automatically empty out old things from your virtual garbage drawer and recover the disk space you need to get things done – and not think about it. Note: This script and manual are only for Windows PCs and require comfort with script editing and automatic file deletion, which is not taken lightly. Sorry, new people, Mac* and Unix folks. I owe you one. To get this ship rolling, we must first create our virtual garbage drawer. Then we have to configure our janitor to clean files older some days you specify. Finally, we will arrange the gatekeeper to clean up at a regular, convenient time. Let's get started. Create a folder in your main document folder that will serve as a pen that keeps files temporary, disposable. You hard core folks can call it temperature. My c:\Gina\junkdrawer\, so that's how I'll mention it for the rest of this article. Set your web browser and e-mail client to save downloaded files and mail attachments in your junkdrawer. Firefox users, in the Tools menu, Options, click Download. Firefox folder setup should download automatically there, as such. (Click to zoom in.) This image has been lost some time after publishing, but you can still view it here. Download the Janitor.vbs script from here. Save it in your document. The mine is located at C:\Gina\scripts\Janitor.vbs. Note: Because my VB script skills are small and weak, the most amazing and generous Lifehacker reader Brian Plexico lends his script-fu and puts this bad boy with Brian – Lifehacker readers, my C: drive and I all thank you. Using a plain text editor like NotePad or EditPlus, open the Janitor.vbs file. Edit icon to set the path to your garbage drawer and the number of days the old files will be when they're deleted. Click here to seeEveryone has a virtual garbage drawer, folder that you save, email ... Read more " ENTER THE PATH CONTAINING THE FILES YOU WANT TO CLEAN UP " 'Path to the root folder you are cleaning up PathToClean = C:\Gina\junkdrawer '^^ "" 'ENTER THE NUMBER OF DAYS SINCE THE FILE WAS LAST MODIFIED ' 'ANY FILE WITH A LAST MODIFIED DATE GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 'THIS NUMBER WILL BE DELETED.' 'Specify the number of days a file must be deleted. numberOfDays = 7'^^ So you'll see above, in the PathToClean start line, replace C:\Gina\junkdrawer with the path to your garbage drawer. Also, change the line numberOfDays to your preferred timeframe. I'm good with deleting stuff 7 days old, but you might want to start with a month (30) or two weeks (14.) Next we will test the script, but before we get there, for the love of all that is holy, read this first. Don't make me use a blink of an eye card. BIG HONKING MUST READ THE WARNING NOTE!!! This script deletes files from your hard drive, from any folder that you specify. Which means if you specify, oh, I don't know, C:\Windows\, you'll be screwed. That is, you can do i can't fix damage to your computer without me nor Brian going to be held accountable. So! Make sure PathToClean is set to a folder with content where Windows doesn't need to work and content you don't care about losing. Additionally, this script deletes files x days older than the last modified date of the file is older than the number of days you specified, even if you just downloaded it. Note this when you save the file to the garbage drawer. Save only stuff in your garbage drawer that you're ok losing. Ok, now that's out of the way. Once your garbage drawer is set up and the script is configured, you can double-click Janitor.vbs to get it going. It will check your garbage drawers and all its child folders for old files and delete them if they exist. Blank folders will also be deleted. If all goes well, you'll see a pop-up box that says: Folder cleaned up! As follows: This image was lost some time after publishing. Note: If you receive a message along the lines of no scripting tools for .vbs file extensions, you'll need to download Windows Scripting Host here. This setting requires a restart, Many viruses and spyware use VB, this script language is written in, to do bad things like spam your friends and steal your identity. This does not mean that VB is inherently bad, it means that it is used for evil. As a result, many spyware scanners and virus protection programs will sound off all kinds of alarms and even disable VB completely in the name of your protection. I personally make sure that this script is benign because it is running on my computer for months and I personally verified the source and it is nothing harmful except deleting files from a folder you specify. White list and allow it to perform no matter what your virus protection and clean spyware says; It's kosher. Once your script is pointing to the right place and you've run it and nothing blows up, you want to start accumuling disposable files in your garbage drawer and have them cleaned out every day. In Control Panel, go to Scheduled Tasks. In the File menu, select New and name your new task Clean up the garbage drawer. Double-click the task and set the Run line: to where your script lives, like this:This image has been lost some time after publishing, but you can still view it here. Click the Set Password button and enter your Windows password. This means that you allow this script to run. Then, on the Schedule tab, set the work to run every day at a convenient time. On my home computer that I leave on all night, the script runs at 3am every morning. Maybe lunchtime will work for you. If you have lunch at different times every day, you can install Only start this task if the computer has idle at least so that the deletion does not run when you are in the middle of something. To check your new task, right-click it in Task Manager and select Run. You'll get a cleansed Folder notification! again. And that's it! Your virtual gatekeeper is set up to clean up after you. Remember, the key to this system is to move files out of your garbage drawer if you will need them long term. Otherwise, they will be lost i can not recover. That's why garbage drawers work best for email attachments and web browser downloads, which are disposable because there's probably an online copy that you can download again at any time. Enjoy putting your personal hard drive janitor to work!* Mac note: I'm sure this will be a trivial programming task to replicate in AppleScript or with Automator. Mac type programster, if you know about an existing script without this or willing to write one, tell me at the tips at lifehacker.com.** Credit that's due: The concept of Janitor's script is absolutely Danny O'Brien's, who, coincidentally Start this whole life of movement hacks to begin with. Read more about Danny's take on hacks, computers and productivity in this Lifehacker interview from back in March.Just about a year ago, tech writer Danny O'Brien strung together from Life and Hacks Read moreGina Trapani is the editor of Lifehacker. Her special feature Geek to Live appears every Wednesday and Friday on Lifehacker. Photo (c) AlexPro9500 - Getty ImagesWhen a recent article suggested that self-driving cars were more likely to hit people with darker skin, it was met with some skepticism. Critics were quick to warn concerns by noting that researchers did not have access to any individual company's self-driving models or data sets. But that's because such industry data is not being provided to the public, leaving researchers with little way to independently vet the technology that has been rolled out on public roads. In an ideal world, scholars will test actual models and training sets used by self-driving car manufacturers, Kate Crawford, an AI researcher not involved in the paper, said in a post defending the work. But with people who are never made available (a problem in itself), papers like this provide powerful insights into the very real risks. The risks described by Georgia Institute of Technology researchers in their report, published in late February, are a five percentage point difference in the likelihood of detecting if a person is in the machine's path, depending on if the person has darker or lighter skin. The authors said they studied popular object detection software programs for their reporting, on the assuming that the same software could also be used by self-driving car companies. The main takeaway from our work is that vision systems that share common structures with those we test should be looked at more closely, one co-author told Vox.Trouble detecting such a warning did not appear to make a difference in the hype industry over self-driving cars. On April 22, a day that Tesla named Autonomy Investment Day, CEO Elon Musk said that one million fully self-driving robo-taxis would be ready for consumers next year. General Motors, amid a 14,000-job cut to focus on self-driving technology, recently said its $2.1 billion profit from the first quarter of 2019 would be aimed at producing a fleet of self-driving vehicles used for car-sharing, which is also poised some time next year. And state lawmakers in Utah in late March unanimously voted to pave their way to self-driving car testing with a measure legally specifying computer software as a driver. Whether the cars are ready to deploy without an actual human inside, however, remains an open question under debate between the industry and its critics. Phil Koopman is a robotics engineer at the University Mellon is a safety tester for self-driving technology testing companies. Although he cannot disclose his personal clients, he is transparent about open safety questions that he says the industry has yet to publically answer. We've seen some these systems have difficulty identifying construction workers, he told ConsumerAffairs, describing anecdocive experiences with the technology. We speculate it's because they're wearing yellow and green jackets that no one else wears. It also troubled women wearing short skirts with bare feet, he said. We've actually found cases where it's completely unsoming. Independent researchers have previously said that detecting cyclists could also be a problem, and industry engineers have acknowledged that cycling detection is another blind spot. (Representatives from Waymo and Ford have previously proposed equipping cyclists with censorship as a possible solution, something that cyclists say unfairly shifts the burden on vulnerable road users.) Koopman did not review the article comparing differences in how object detection software reacts to skin color when he spoke to ConsumerAffairs. But in general, he noted that technology is only as biased as humans create it. If AI is not shown enough people to look at a certain way, then the machine will not learn to see them as human beings. It's not really that they have dark skin, it's that they have different skin color than most data sets, he said. Information about whether the industry is using enough people of color in their data sets is not publicly available, like many others with self-driving cars. But research on other emerging technologies in Silicon Valley is not encouraging on this front. In January, a report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) said that Amazon's facial recognition software, Rekognition, seemed to struggle with identifying women and blacks. Therefore, the potential for weaponization and abuse of facial analysis technologies cannot be ignored, MIT researchers warn. As for self-driving cars, Koopman says there are two big questions that the industry is facing right now. When will they deploy? When will they be safely accepted? he said. I'd love that before they deploy. But right now, with our current regulatory system, they can deploy when they think they're safe, which is not the same as knowing they're safe. The stalled A.V. Startup ActThe automotive and technology companies that make up the self-driving industry have assured consumers that their technology will save lives, repeatedly pointing out the thousands of car crashes that humans cause each year as justification. The federal guidelines stipulate self-driving cars are mostly voluntary and are now leaving for states like Arizona, where lawmakers have promised to pave the way for new technology and refrain from doing anything that would put the brakes on innovation. The A.V. Start Act, a bill allowing the expansion of testing and deployment of self-driving cars at the federal level, amid resistance from national organizations representing cyclists, police officers, nurses, wheelchair users, and brain injury victims, to name a few of the groups who say the technology needs to undergo further testing on closed courses. Even if you never get inside a driverless car, people will share the roads with them, Ralph Hotchkiss, founder of a wheelchair manufacturing company, noted. But industry and some lawmakers insist that the technology is ready for public roads. When Utah's lawmakers voted to bring self-driving testing to the state in March, state officials described the technology as a public interest. We believe that connection and autonomy will save lives, Blaine Leonard, an engineer with the state's department of transportation, recently told Government Technology magazine. We believe that in the long run, this will be safer, so we want to encourage it and we want to promote it. Safety advocates remain skeptical of that story, pointing out that the industry has been open about the huge amount of money it expects autonomic technology to generate. Self-driving technology will allow a new 'Passenger Economy' worth US$7 trillion, Intel has predicted optimisticly, more than expected 2017 GDPs of Japan and Brazil combined.

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