

Recover Your Deleted Files

Have you accidentally deleted pics off a media card or quick-formatted your drive, and you want to recover the contents? You may be able to recover your data with these handy tools

TIME **1 to 5**
HOURS

We have this “friend,” whom we’ll call “Steve,” who did something really, well, stupid. He accidentally deleted his entire archive of digital photos—more than 9GB of shots including 99.99 percent of all photos that existed of his twin 3-year-old daughters—by mistakenly quick-formatting the wrong drive in my, err, “his,” PC. D’oh!

Steve naturally came to *Maximum PC* with his dilemma, and our data sleuths were on the case. A little tool called *Zero Assumption Recovery* solved the deleted-photo issue in short order. In just a few quick steps, and an hour’s wait for the program to scan Steve’s 300GB drive (which we installed as a secondary drive in another PC), we had his lost photos back! Not only did the scan find the pics, but it also managed to recover the original file names and folder structure—a feat several other similar programs couldn’t match.

But what about all the other data on the drive? We wanted it *all* back. So we turned to the big guns: *GetDataBack for NTFS*, which worked exactly as advertised. Finally, we also investigated how to get deleted files off of removable media, such as CompactFlash and SD memory cards.

Thankfully, Steve only quick-formatted his drive, and he immediately stopped using it, so the data was still there to be discovered. Any of the following methods should help you too, should you ever find yourself in poor Steve’s shoes.

BY STEVE KLETT

INGREDIENTS

- **ZERO ASSUMPTION RECOVERY**
Free trial, www.z-a-recovery.com
- **GETDATABACK FOR NTFS**
\$100, www.runtime.org
- **MEDIARECOVER**
\$30, www.mediarecover.com
- **A SPARE HARD DRIVE OR PC**
- **LOTS OF TIME:**

CAUTION!

If you accidentally delete data off of a drive, or need to recover data from a quick-formatted drive, immediately stop using the drive. Install it as a secondary drive in the original PC, or in a spare machine, and install and run all recovery software on an unaffected drive. Do not save or install anything to the drive you want to recover data from, or you could accidentally render your deleted files unrecoverable!



Recover Data from Your Hard Drive

GetDataBack for NTFS is the epitome of the adage “you get what you pay for.” Several free-ware programs, including even the free trial version of *GetDataBack for NTFS* itself, either didn’t find a thing on our problem drive, or spit out just a laundry list of meaningless numbered files instead of our original file-structure.

Enter the full registered version of *GDB for NTFS* (\$100), and presto—not only did the application find *all* of our lost files, but it completely recovered the drive’s original file structure and allowed us to recover everything, not just the digital photos we were initially hoping for!

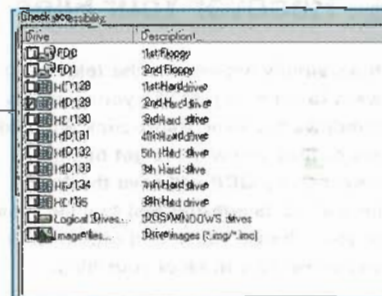
Sure, \$100 is a pretty big hit on the wallet,

but when you consider that it can cost hundreds, even thousands, to have your data professionally recovered, it’s money well spent (particularly when you add in the ability to perform the recovery yourself: Do you really want some stranger to see all those lost pics and “home movies” you want back?)

Here’s how to use *GDB* to recover deleted or lost files on a working drive formatted with the NTFS file system. If your hard drive isn’t detected by Windows, or can’t be read, you’ll probably have to send the drive to an expensive data-recovery specialist to recover your bits.

Determine the Correct Hard Drive

Unfortunately, the program does not list your drives in the same manner as Windows does, but with a little trial-and-error you should be able to determine the drive you want to scan. For example, if you want to scan your D drive, which is your secondary hard drive, select “2nd hard drive” and click Next.



2 Select the Proper Partition



Your next move is to select the partition you wish to scan, which in our case is the first partition (NTFS) listed in the Available Drives column. Click the partition name to highlight it, and then click Next.

3 Select the Exhaustive Mode

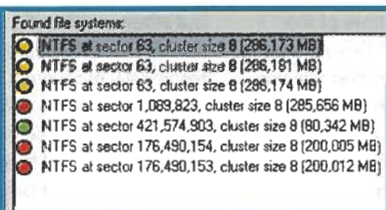
While *GDB* gives you the option of selecting which specific sectors on your drive you'd like to scan, we doubt anyone is hardcore enough to record the specific drive sector on which your data is physically stored—we know we're not. So we'll have to scan the time-consuming way: Toggle the "Search entire drive" and "Excessive search" radio buttons and click Next. Excessive search means exactly what you'd think: It directs *GDB* to perform the most exhaustive search possible of every sector of your drive.

4 Now It's Time to Wait

Sit back and read *War and Peace* or catch up on some sleep—this is gonna take a while. We jest, but only partly; scanning our 300GB drive took an hour and a half.

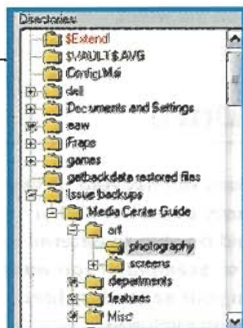
5 Choose the Files to Recover

Once the scan is complete, you must select the file system you want displayed in a "recovery tree," which simply means you need to choose from the scan list what logical drive you want to see the contents of, and click Next. After a relatively brief 10- to 15-minute wait, *GDB* will build and display the file structure of the lost logical drive you selected.



6 Recover Your Files

Now, simply browse for the folder you want to recover just like you would in Windows Explorer. Right-click any folders or files you want to get back, and select Copy. *GDB* will save the folder (and all of its sub-folders) to a location of your choice. Rinse and repeat until you've recovered all of your files.



The Freeware Approach

You're in college and would rather spend your money on Milwaukee's Best and pizza than fancy-pants data-recovery software: We've been there. You're not out of luck, as there are some decent free options

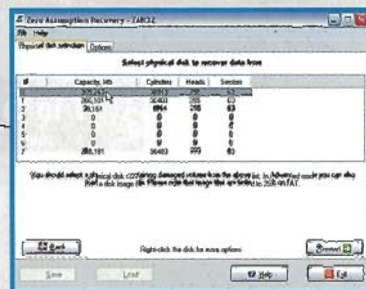
out there, such as the free trial version of *Zero Assumption Recovery*. This slick little program will not only recover deleted images, but many other file types. Here's how to use *ZAR* to get your data back.

1 Optimize Your System

Fire up the program—you can probably leave the default settings alone. If you have more than 1GB of system memory, however, select the Options tab and "Faster method" from the "Volume parameters analysis" pull-down menu. Go back to Preliminary Setup and click the Proceed button.

2 Select the Hard Drive to Scan

Now, select the drive you want to scan for lost files by clicking it; select Proceed. Next, select the partition on the drive you want to search and click Proceed again.

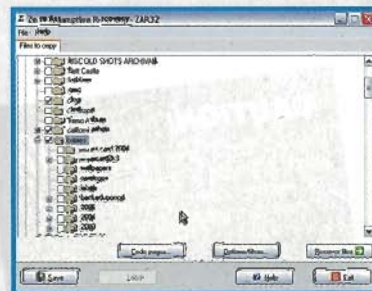


3 Wait for the Scan to Finish

Sit back and wait for the program to scan your drive, which might take a long time, depending on the size of the partition you selected. Our 300GB drive took an hour and 15 minutes.

4 Recover Your Files

Whoop! If the stars are aligned in your favor you will be rewarded with your old folder structure, which you can navigate to locate and restore your files. Note: The trial version allows only four folders to be recovered per scan, so you might need to repeat this procedure multiple times—or pony up the \$100 for the full version.



Recover Data from Portable Media

If you accidentally delete photos from one of the memory cards you use in your digital camera, such as a CompactFlash or SD and you want them back—it's no problem. There are several utilities, including several freeware programs such as ZAR, that will do the trick.

However, when it comes to preserving precious memories, we recommend you don't skimp: Slap down \$30 on *MediaRecover*, which is designed from

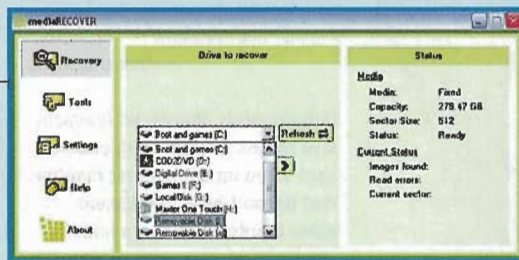
the ground up to rescue lost media files from hard drives and media cards of all types, including SmartMedia, Compact Flash, Memory Stick, Secure Digital, xD Picture Card, Microdrives, and MultiMedia Card. It does a good job, it's relatively fast, and it's a snap to use. We deleted a few dozen photos off a 1GB CF card and used *MR* to get 'em back—in less than 30 minutes, from start to finish.

1 Identify Your Drive

Insert the CF card into your PC's media reader and select the appropriate removable media drive letter to scan.

Click Next, and then select a folder where you want recovered files to be saved. Click

Next, then Start, and then select a Scan method (we choose Quick Scan because we're just after deleted photos)—leaving everything else at the default settings—and click Continue.



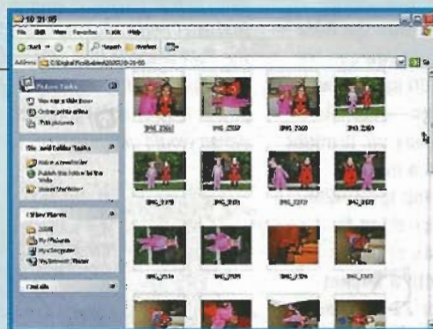
2 Select the Images to Recover



The scan commences and a window pops up that displays thumbnails of recovered images. When the scan is complete you just need to choose which images you want to save, and select Save Images. The preview window will close and bring you back to the root menu.

3 Save Your Files

The pay-off: Now, simply hit the "Open recovered files" folder and you're done—*MR* opens the folder in Explorer—in Thumbnails view no less—and you can go to sleep knowing your pics are safe once again. **MRPC**



[GEEKED AT BIRTH.]



You can talk the talk.
Can you walk the walk?
Here's a chance to prove it.
Please geek responsibly.

www.uat.edu > 800.658.5744

Game Programming, Game Design
Artificial Life Programming
Computer Forensics and more!