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How to Erase a Hard Drive Using DBAN



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1 of 9 Download the DBAN Program

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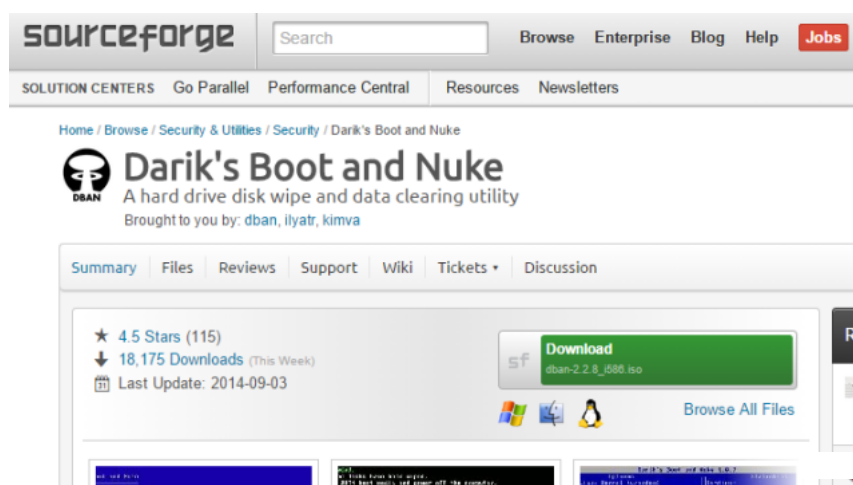
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Download the DBAN ISO File.

Updated August 31, 2016.

Darik's Boot And Nuke (DBAN) is a completely [free data destruction program](#) that you can use to *completely* erase all the files on a [hard drive](#).

Whether you're selling a computer or just wanting to reinstall an [OS](#) from scratch, DBAN is the best tool of this type there is. The fact that it's free makes it all the better.

Because DBAN erases every single file on the drive, it has to be run while the operating system isn't in use.

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To do this, you must "burn" the program to a disc (like an empty CD or DVD) or to a [USB](#) device, and then run it from there to erase the hard drive you want to erase.

This is a **complete walkthrough** on using DBAN, which will cover downloading the program to your computer, burning it to a bootable device, and erasing all the files.

See [my complete review of DBAN](#) for a non-tutorial look at the program, including my thoughts on the program, the various wipe methods it supports, and lots more.

To start off, you have to download DBAN to your computer. This can be done on the computer you're going to erase or on an entirely different one. However you do it, the



TODAY'S TOP



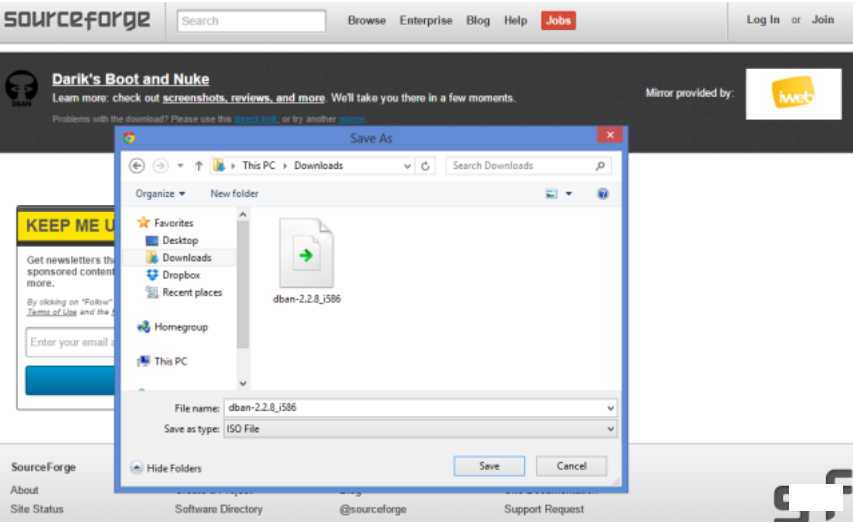
VIEW MC

• [Delete Hard Drive Data](#)

goal is to get the [ISO file](#) downloaded and then burned to a bootable device like a CD or [flash drive](#).

Visit the [DBAN download page](#) (shown above) and then click the green download button.

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Save the DBAN ISO File to Your Computer



Save DBAN to a Familiar Folder.

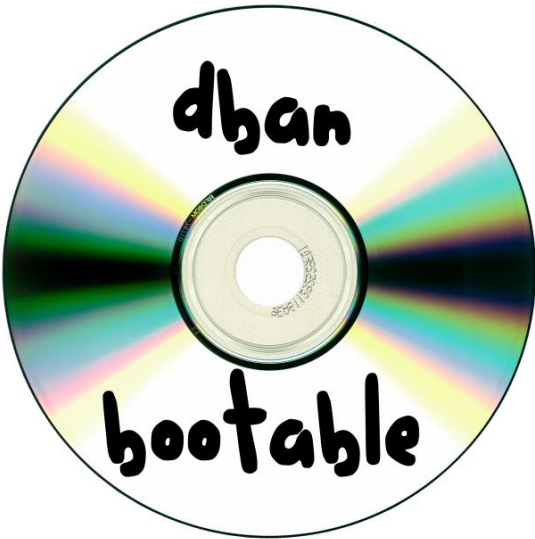
When you're prompted to download [DBAN](#) to your computer, be sure to save it somewhere easy for you to access. Anywhere is fine, just make sure you make a mental note as to where.

As you can see in this screenshot, I'm saving it to my "Downloads" folder, but you can choose any folder you'd like, like the "Desktop."

The download size is less than 20 MB, which is pretty small, so it shouldn't take very long at all to finish downloading.

Once the DBAN file is on your computer, you need to burn it to a disc or [USB](#) device, which is covered in the next step.

3 of 9
Burn DBAN to a disc or USB Device



Burn DBAN to a Disc (or Flash Drive).



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To use [DBAN](#), you'll need to *properly* put the [ISO file](#) on a device that you can then boot from.

Because the DBAN ISO is so small, it can easily fit on a CD, or even a small [flash drive](#). If all you have is something larger, like a DVD or BD, that's fine too.

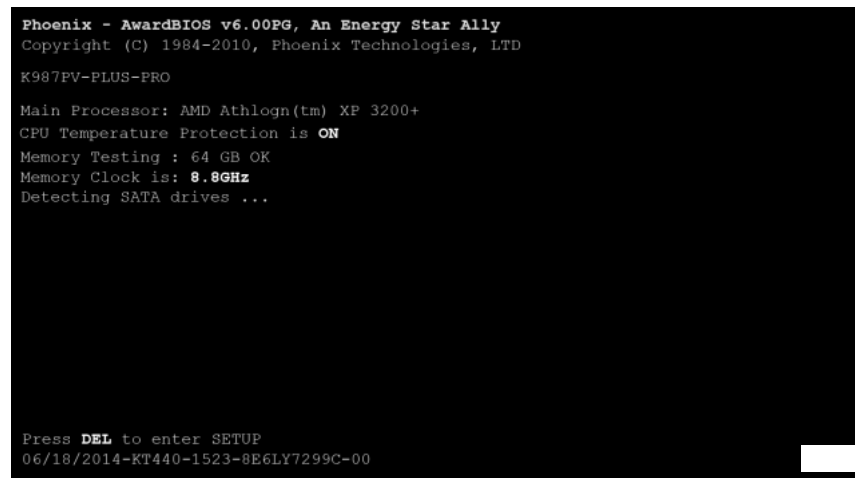
See [How To Burn an ISO Image File to a DVD](#) or [How To Burn an ISO File to a USB Drive](#) if you're not sure how to do this.

DBAN can't just be copied over to a disc or [USB](#) device and be expected to work correctly so be sure to follow the instructions in one of the links above if you're not already familiar with burning ISO images.

In the next step, you'll boot from the disc or USB device you've just prepped in this step.

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Restart and Boot Into the DBAN Disc or USB Device



Boot from the Disc or Flash Drive.

Insert the disc or plug in the [USB](#) device that you burned [DBAN](#) to in the previous step and then restart your computer.

You might see something like the screen above, or maybe your computer logo. Regardless, just let it do its thing. You'll know pretty quickly if something isn't right.

Important: The next step shows what you should see next but while we're here, I should mention: if Windows or whatever [operating system](#) you have installed tries to start like it normally does, then booting from this DBAN disc or USB drive has *not* worked.

Depending on whether you burned DBAN to a disc or to a [flash drive](#), see either [How To Boot From a CD, DVD, or BD Disc](#) or [How To Boot From a USB Device](#) for help.

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Choose an Option from the DBAN Main Menu

```

Darik's Boot and Nuke

Warning: This software irrecoverably destroys data.

This software is provided without any warranty; without even the implied
warranty of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. In no event
shall the software authors or contributors be liable for any damages arising
from the use of this software. This software is provided "as is".

http://www.dban.org/

* Press the F2 key to learn about DBAN.
* Press the F3 key for a list of quick commands.
* Press the F4 key to read the RAID disclaimer.
* Press the ENTER key to start DBAN in interactive mode.
* Enter autonuke at this prompt to start DBAN in automatic mode.

boot: _

```

Main Menu Options in DBAN.

WARNING: [DBAN](#) is potentially just *moments* away from *irreversibly erasing all the files on all your hard drives*, so be sure to pay close attention to the instructions in this step and the following ones.

Note: The screen shown here is the main screen in DBAN and the one you should see first. If not, go back to the previous step and make sure you're booting from the disc or flash drive properly.

Before we get started, please know that DBAN is designed to be used with your [keyboard](#) only...

your [mouse](#) is useless in this program.

In addition to using the regular letter keys and the Enter key, you'll need to know how to operate the function (F#) keys. These are located at the top of your keyboard and are as easy to click as any other key, but some keyboards are a little different. If the function keys aren't working for you, be sure to hold down the "Fn" key first, and then select the function key you want to use.

DBAN can work in one of two ways. You can either enter a command at the bottom of the screen to immediately start erasing all the [hard drives](#) you have plugged in to your computer, using a predefined set of instructions. Or, you can choose the hard drives you want to erase, as well as select exactly how you want them to be deleted.

As you can see, the **F2** and **F4** options are informational only, so you don't have to be concerned about reading through them unless you have a RAID system set up (which probably isn't the case for most of you... you would probably know if so).

For the quick method of erasing every hard drive plugged in, you'll want to press the **F3** key. The options you see there (as well as the **autonuke** one here) are described in full detail in the next step.

To have the flexibility to choose the hard drives you want to erase, how many times you want the files to be overwritten, and more specific options, press the **ENTER** key at this screen to open interactive mode. You can read more about that screen in step 7.

If you know how you want to proceed, and you're confident that there's nothing on any connected drive that you want to keep, *then go for it*.

Continue with this tutorial for some more options or if you're not sure which way to go.

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Immediately Start Using DBAN With a Quick Command

```

Darik's Boot and Nuke: Quick Commands

You may enter these commands at the boot prompt. In each case, all disks in
the computer will be wiped automatically without confirmation.

dod          Wipe all disks with the DoD 5220.22-M Method.
dodshort     Wipe all disks with the short DoD 5220.22-M Method. (Default.)
ops2         Wipe all disks with the RCMP TSSIT OPS-II method.
gutmann      Wipe all disks with the Gutmann method.
prng         Wipe all disks with the PRNG Stream method.
quick        Wipe all disks with the Quick Erase method.

Edit the syslinux.cfg file on the floppy disk to change the default
behavior of DBAN. Changing the syslinux.cfg file in the CD-R/CD-RW version of
DBAN requires remastering the ISO file.

Most people should use autonuke because the defaults for autonuke will always
be safe and sensible.

Press the F4 key for troubleshooting commands.
Press the F1 key to continue.

boot: _

```

Quick Command Options in DBAN.

Choosing **F3** from [DBAN's](#) main menu will open this "Quick Commands" screen.

Important: If you use any command you see on this screen, DBAN will *not* ask you which [hard drives](#) you want to erase, nor will you be required to confirm any prompts. Instead, it will automatically assume you want to remove all the files from all the connected drives, and will start immediately after you enter the command. To choose which hard drives to erase, just press the **F1** key, and then go to the next step, ignoring everything else on this screen.

DBAN can use one of several different methods to erase files. The pattern used to erase the files, as well as how many times to repeat that pattern, are the differences you'll find in each of these methods.

In bold are the commands DBAN supports, followed by the [data sanitization method](#) they use:

- **dod** - [DoD 5220.22-M](#)
- **dodshort** - Same as **dod** except only 3 passes are run instead of 7
- **ops2** - [RCMP TSSIT OPS-II](#)
- **gutmann** - [Gutmann](#)
- **prng** - [Random Data](#)
- **quick** - [Write Zero](#)

You can also use the **autonuke** command, which is the exact same thing as **dodshort**.

Click the links next to the commands to read more about how they work. As an example, **gutmann** will overwrite the files with a random character, and do so up to 35 times, whereas **quick** will write a zero and only do it once.

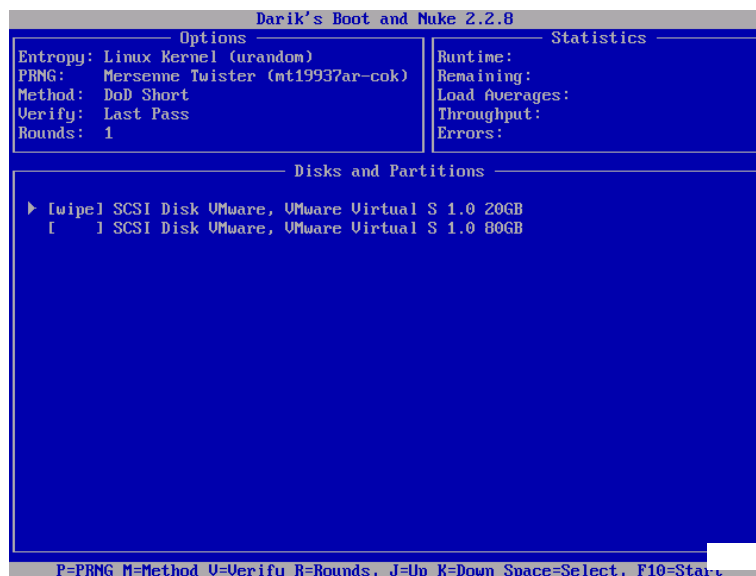
DBAN recommends using the **dodshort** command. You can use any of them that you think is necessary, but ones like **gutmann** are surely an overkill that will only take more time to complete than is necessary.

Simply type one of these commands into DBAN to start wiping all your hard drives with that specific data wipe method.

If you want to choose which hard drives to erase, as well as customize the wipe method, see the next step, which covers interactive mode.

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Choose Which Hard Drives to Wipe With Interactive Mode



Interactive Mode in DBAN.

Interactive mode lets you customize exactly how [DBAN](#) will erase files, as well as which [hard drives](#) it will erase. You can get to this screen with the **ENTER** key from DBAN's main menu.

If you don't want to do this, and would rather have DBAN erase all your files the easy way, restart this walkthrough at step 4, and be sure to choose the **F3** key.

Along the bottom of the screen are the different menu options.

Pressing the **K** and **J** keys will move you up and down a list, and the Enter key will select an option from a menu. As you change each option, the top left of the screen will reflect those changes. The middle of the screen is how you choose which hard drives you want to erase.

Pressing the **P** key will open the PRNG (Pseudo Random Number Generator) settings. There are two options you can choose from - [Mersenne Twister](#) and [ISAAC](#), but keeping the default one chosen should be perfectly fine.

Selecting the letter **M** lets you choose which [wipe method](#) you want to run. See the previous step for more information on these options. DBAN recommends choosing *DoD Short* if you're not sure.

V opens a set of three options you can choose from to define how often DBAN should verify that the drive is actually empty after running the chosen wipe method. You're able to disable verification entirely, turn it on for the last pass only, or set it to verify the drive is empty after each and every pass has finished. I recommend choosing *Verify Last Pass* because it will keep verification on, but won't require it to run after each and every pass, which would otherwise slow the whole process down.

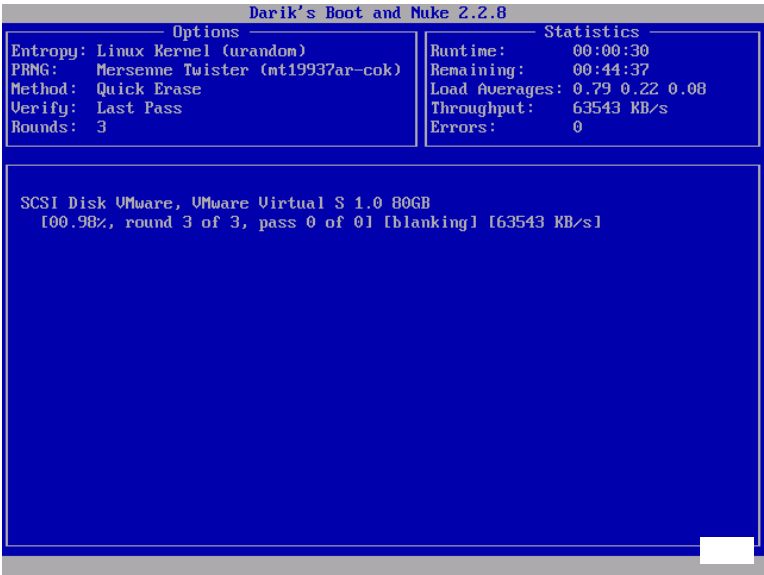
Choose how many times the chosen wipe method should run by opening the "Rounds" screen with the **R** key, entering a number, and pressing **ENTER** to save it. Keeping it at 1 will simply run the method once, but should still be enough to securely erase everything.

Finally, you must choose the drive(s) you want to erase. Most up and down the list with the **K** and **J** keys, and press the **Space** key to select/deselect the drive(s). The word "wipe" will appear to the left of the drive(s) you choose.

Once you're sure all the correct settings have been chosen, press the **F10** key to immediately begin wiping the hard drive(s) with the options you've chosen.

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Wait for DBAN to Erase the Hard Drive(s)



DBAN Erasing a Hard Drive.

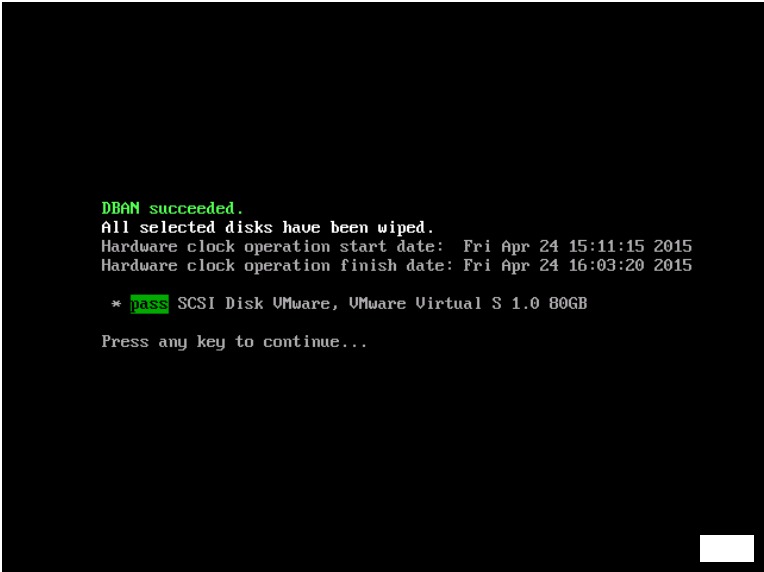
This is the screen that'll show once [DBAN](#) has started.

As you can see, you can neither stop nor pause the process at this point.

You can view the statistics, like time remaining and any number of errors, from the top right side of the screen.

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Verify DBAN Has Successfully Erased the Hard Drive(s)



Verify DBAN is Finished.

Once [DBAN](#) has completely finished the data wipe of the selected [hard drive](#)(s), you'll see this "DBAN succeeded" message.

At this point, you can safely remove the disc or [USB](#) device that you've installed DBAN to and then shut down or restart your computer.

If you're selling or disposing of your computer or hard drive then you're done.

If you're reinstalling Windows, see [How to Clean Install Windows](#) for instructions on starting over again from scratch.

Related Articles

- [A Full Review of DBAN, a Free Data Destruction Software Tool](#)
- [What to Know about KillDisk \(Free Data Destruction Software\)](#)

Our Expert Recommends

- [Ways You're Screwing Up Your Computer](#)
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- [How To Wipe a Computer Hard Drive](#)
- [PCDiskEraser: A Full Review](#)
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