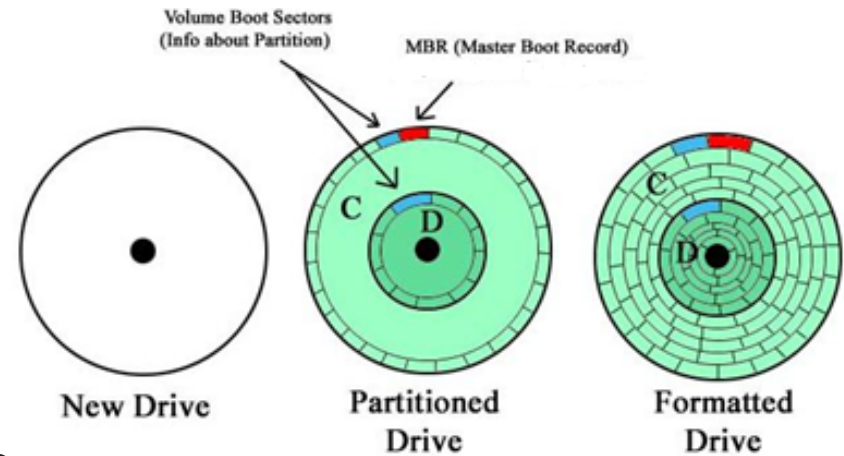


Exploring Microsoft File Structures

- In Microsoft file structures, sectors are grouped to form **clusters**
 - **Clusters** can have one sector or more
- OS assigns these **cluster numbers**, called **logical addresses**
 - *Address point to relative position*
- **Clusters** are numbered sequentially starting at **0 in NTFS** and **2 in FAT**
- **Sector numbers** are called **physical addresses**
 - *From address 0 to last sector on disk*
 - **First sector** of all disks contains a system area, the boot record, and a file structure database
- Clusters and their addresses are specific to a **logical disk drive**, which is a **disk partition**

Disk Partitions

- A **partition** is a logical drive. *i.e* “**C**”, “**D**”, “**E**” and etc
- Windows OSs can have **three primary partitions** followed by an extended partition that **can contain one or more logical drives**



<https://www.minitool.com>

One disk can only have one Master Boot Record but multiple volume boot sectors

- **Partition gap**
 - Unused space between partitions
 - ***Can use to hide data!***

Disk Partitions (Cont)

- The **partition table(s)** is in the **Master Boot Record (MBR)**
 - Located at **sector 0** (*first 512 bytes*) of the disk drive
- **MBR** stores information about partitions on a disk and their locations, size, and other important items
- In a hexadecimal editor, such as **WinHex**, you can find the **first** partition at **offset 0x1BE**
 - **File system's hexadecimal code (partition type)** is offset **3** bytes from 0x1BE for the first partition
 - **Sector address** of where this partition **starts** on the drive is offset **8** bytes from 0x1BE.
 - **The number of sectors** assigned to the partition are offset **12** bytes for position 0x1BE.

Disk Partitions (Cont)

Table 5-1 Hexadecimal codes in the partition table

Hexadecimal code	File system
01	DOS 12-bit FAT (floppy disks)
04	DOS 16-bit FAT for partitions smaller than 32 MB
05	Extended partition
06	DOS 16-bit FAT for partitions larger than 32 MB
07	NTFS and exFAT
08	AIX bootable partition
09	AIX data partition
0B	DOS 32-bit FAT
0C	DOS 32-bit FAT for interrupt 13 support
0F	Extended Partition with Logical Block Address (LBA)
17	Hidden NTFS partition (XP and earlier)
1B	Hidden FAT32 partition
1E	Hidden VFAT partition
3C	Partition Magic recovery partition
66–69	Novell partitions
81	Linux
82	Linux swap partition (can also be associated with Solaris partitions)
83	Linux native file systems (Ext2, Ext3, Ext4, Reiser, Xiafs)
86	FAT16 volume/stripe set (Windows NT)
87	High Performance File System (HPFS) fault-tolerant mirrored partition or NTFS volume/stripe set
A5	FreeBSD and BSD/386
A6	OpenBSD
A9	NetBSD
C7	Typical of a corrupted NTFS volume/stripe set
EB	BeOS

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*A **partition table** is a **table** maintained on disk by the operating system describing the **partition** on that disk.*

key hexadecimal codes is used by OS to identify and maintain the file system. i.e 0x07 => NTFS

Drive Slack, RAM Slack, File Slack

- Microsoft OSs allocate disk space for files by **clusters**
 - Results in **Drive Slack**
 - Unused space in a cluster between the end of an active file and the end of the cluster
- **Drive Slack** includes:
 - **RAM slack** (*unused space between EOF and end of last used sector*) and
 - **File slack** (*unused space allocated for a file*)

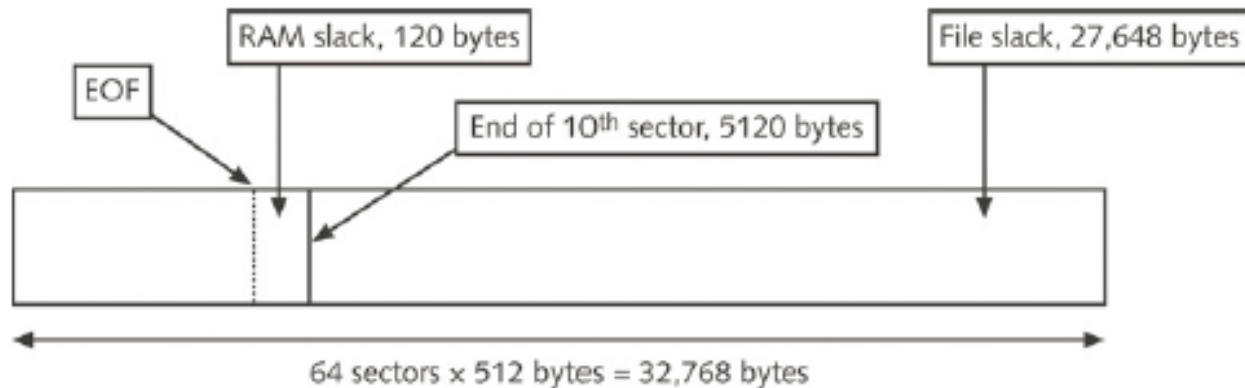


Figure 5-8 File slack space
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- Document size is 5000 bytes of data.
- Assuming hard disk size is 1.6G, the OS allocates about 32,000 bytes, or 64 sectors (512 bytes per sector), for this file.
- The unused space, 27,000 bytes, is the file slack.
- **RAM slack** is the portion between EOF and the last sector (10th sector) used. So the RAM slack is 120 bytes. The remaining sectors are referred to as “**file slack**” and is equal to 27648 bytes.
- See diagram above

*Note : The data used to fill the **120-byte** void (RAM Slack) is pulled from RAM. Any information in RAM at that point, such as logon IDs or passwords, is placed in RAM slack!!*

Default : 1 sector = 512 bytes

File Systems

FAT

NTFS

Examining FAT Disks

- **File Allocation Table (FAT)**
 - File structure database that Microsoft originally designed for floppy disks
- **FAT database** is typically written to a **disk's outermost track** and contains:
 - Filenames, directory names, date and time stamps, the starting cluster number, and file attributes
- **Three current FAT versions**
 - FAT16, FAT32, and exFAT (used by Xbox game systems)



Examining FAT Disks

- Cluster sizes vary according to disk drive size and file system

Table 5-2 Sectors and bytes per cluster

Drive size	Sectors per cluster	FAT16
8–32 MB	1	512 bytes
32–64 MB	2	1 KB (1024)
64–128 MB	4	2 KB
128–256 MB	8	4 KB
256–512 MB	16	8 KB
512–1024 MB	32	16 KB
1024–2048 MB	64	32 KB
2048–4096 MB	128	64 KB

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Note : sector size = 512 bytes

Examining NTFS Disks (Cont)

- In NTFS, everything written to the disk is considered a **file**
- On an **NTFS** disk
 - First data set is the **Partition Boot Sector**
 - Next is **Master File Table (MFT)**
- In NTFS, clusters are smaller for smaller disk drives
- NTFS results in much **less file slack space**

Examining NTFS Disks (Cont)

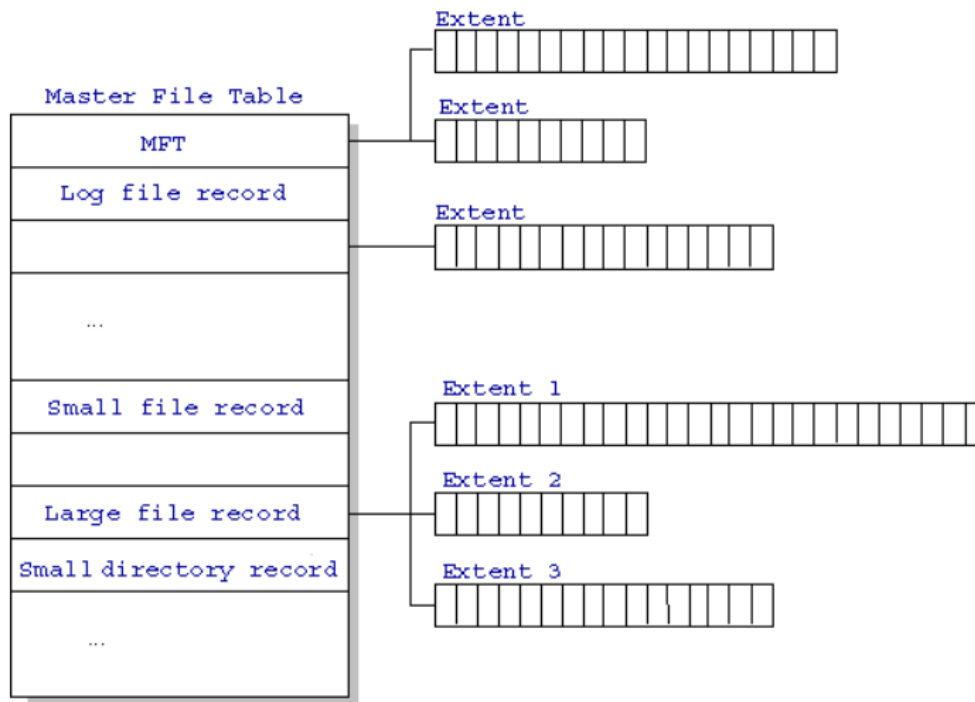
Table 5-3 Cluster sizes in an NTFS disk

Drive size	Sectors per cluster	Cluster size
7–512 MB	8	4 KB
512 MB–1 GB	8	4 KB
1–2 GB	8	4 KB
2 GB–2 TB	8	4 KB
2–16 TB	8	4 KB
16–32 TB	16	8 KB
32–64 TB	32	16 KB
64–128 TB	64	32 KB
128–256 TB	128	64 KB

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Note : sector size = 512 bytes

MFT Structure



The master file table allocates a certain amount of space for each file record. The attributes of a file are written to the allocated space in the MFT. Small files and directories (typically 512 bytes or smaller), such as the file illustrated in next figure, can entirely be contained within the master file table record.

Ref : ntfs.com/ntfs-mft.htm

NTFS System Files

Master File Table (MFT) contains information about **all files** on the disk including the system files OS uses

- In the MFT, the first 15 records are reserved for system files used to describe MFT. They have file names beginning with a \$ sign
- Records in the MFT are called **metadata**

Table 5-4 Metadata records in the MFT

Filename	System file	Record position	Description
\$Mft	MFT	0	Base file record for each folder on the NTFS volume; other record positions in the MFT are allocated if more space is needed.
\$MftMirr	MFT 2	1	The first four records of the MFT are saved in this position. If a single sector fails in the first MFT, the records can be restored, allowing recovery of the MFT.
\$LogFile	Log file	2	Previous transactions are stored here to allow recovery after a system failure in the NTFS volume.
\$Volume	Volume	3	Information specific to the volume, such as label and version, is stored here.
\$AttrDef	Attribute definitions	4	A table listing attribute names, numbers, and definitions.
\$	Root filename index	5	This is the root folder on the NTFS volume.
\$Bitmap	Cluster bitmap	6	A map of the NTFS partition shows which clusters are in use and which are available.
\$Boot	Boot sector	7	Used to mount the NTFS volume during the bootstrap process; additional code is listed here if it's the boot drive for the system.
\$BadClus	Bad cluster file	8	For clusters that have unrecoverable errors, an entry of the cluster location is made in this file.
\$Secure	Security file	9	Unique security descriptors for the volume are listed in this file. It's where the access control list (ACL) is maintained for all files and folders on the NTFS volume.
\$UpCase	Uppercase table	10	Converts all lowercase characters to uppercase Unicode characters for the NTFS volume.
\$ExtEnd	NTFS extension file	11	Optional extensions are listed here, such as quotas, object identifiers, and reparse point data.
		12-15	Reserved for future use.

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MFT File Attributes

- In NTFS MFT, **all files and folders** are stored in separate **records** of **1024 bytes** each
- Each record contains file or folder information
 - This information is divided into **record fields**
 - A **record field** is referred to as an **attribute ID**
- File or folder information is typically stored in one of two ways in an MFT record:
 - **Resident** and **nonresident**

MFT and File Attributes (Cont)

- All **MFT record** (*files or folders*) starts with a **56 byte** value known as **MFT header**.
- For very small files(*resident*), about 512 bytes or less, all file metadata and data are stored in the MFT record.
- Files larger than 512 bytes (*nonresident*) are stored outside the MFT
 - MFT record provides **cluster addresses** where the file is stored on the drive's partition
 - Referred to as **data runs**

Table 5-5 Attributes in the MFT

Attribute ID	Purpose
0x10	\$Standard Information This field contains data on file creation, alterations, MFT changes, read dates and times, and DOS file permissions.
0x20	\$Attribute.List Attributes that don't fit in the MFT (nonresident attributes) are listed here along with their locations.
0x30	\$File.Name The long and short names for a file are contained here. Up to 255 Unicode bytes are available for long filenames. For POSIX requirements, additional names or hard links can also be listed. Files with short filenames have only one attribute ID 0x30. Long filenames have two attribute ID 0x30s in the MFT record: one for the short name and one for the long name.
0x40	\$Object.ID (\$Volume.Version in Windows NT) Ownership and who has access rights to the file or folder are listed here. Every MFT record is assigned a unique GUID. Depending on your NTFS setup, some file records might not contain this attribute ID.
0x50	\$Security.Descriptor Contains the access control list (ACL) for the file.

*Basic information of a file in MFT starts at **0x10** after the MFT header (after 56 byte)*

MFT and File Attributes (Cont)

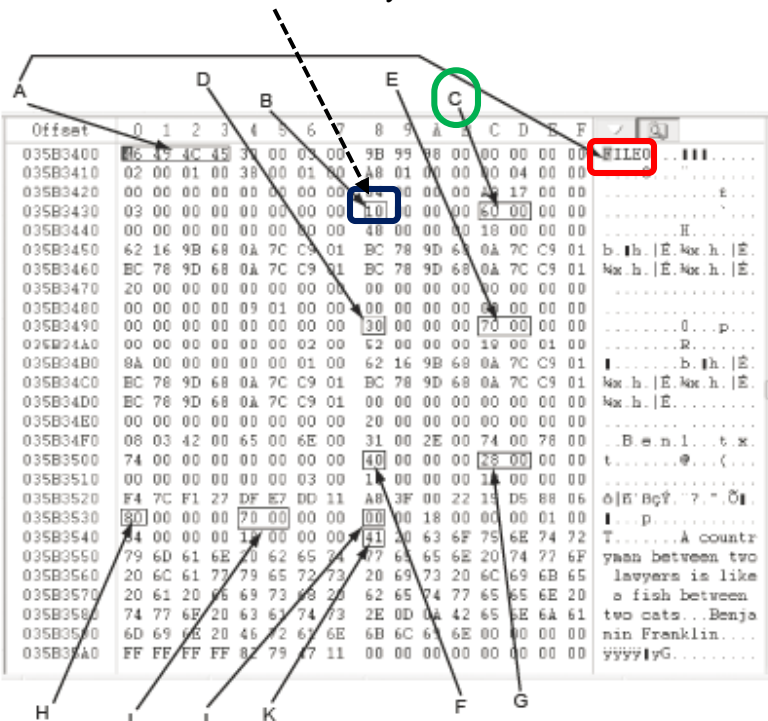
Table 5-5 Attributes in the MFT (*continued*)

Attribute ID	Purpose
0x60	\$Volume.Name The volume-unique file identifier is listed here. Not all files need this unique identifier.
0x70	\$Volume.Information This field indicates the version and state of the volume.
0x80	\$Data File data for resident files or data runs for nonresident files.
0x90	\$Index.Root Implemented for use of folders and indexes.
0xA0	\$Index.Allocation Implemented for use of folders and indexes.
0xB0	\$Bitmap A bitmap indicating cluster status, such as which clusters are in use and which are available.
0xC0	\$Reparse.Point This field is used for volume mount points and Installable File System (IFS) filter drivers. For the IFS, it marks specific files used by drivers.
0xD0	\$EA.Information For use with OS/2 HPFS.
0xE0	For use with OS/2 HPFS.
0x100	\$Logged.Utility.Stream This field is used by Encrypting File System (EFS) in Windows 2000 and later

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MFT and File Attributes (Cont)

Start of attribute 0x10 after 56 bytes header info

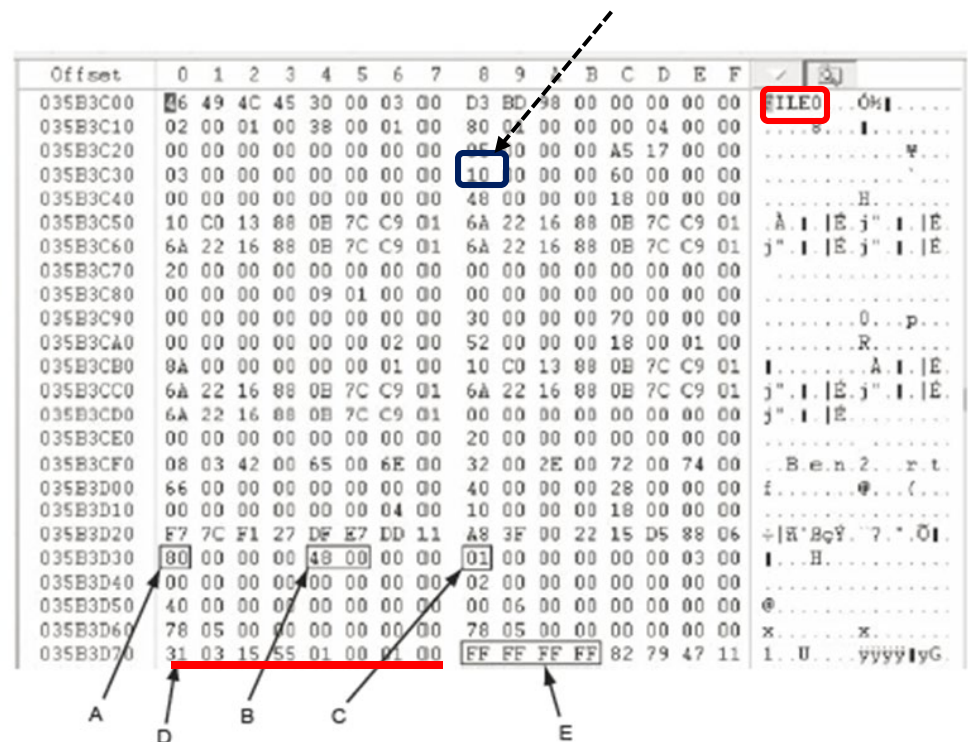


- A: All MFT records start with FILE0
- B: Start of attribute 0x10
- C: Length of attribute 0x10 (value 60) 60 00 → 00 60 (HEX) ⇒ 96 (DEC)
- D: Start of attribute 0x30
- E: Length of attribute 0x30 (value 70) 70 00 → 00 70
- F: Start of attribute 0x40
- G: Length of attribute 0x40 (value 28)
- H: Start of attribute 0x80
- I: Length of attribute 0x80 (value 70)
- J: Attribute 0x80 resident flag
- K: Starting position of resident data

Figure 5-10 Resident file in an MFT record
Courtesy of X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net

Resident file attributes

Start of attribute 0x10 after 56 bytes header info



- A: Start of nonresident attribute 0x80
- B: Length of nonresident attribute 0x80
- C: Attribute 0x80 nonresident flag
- D: Starting point of data run
- E: End-of-record marker (FF FF FF FF) for the MFT record

Figure 5-12 Nonresident file in an MFT record
Courtesy of X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net

Non-resident file attributes

MFT Structures for File Data

- For the **header** of all MFT records, the record fields of interest are as follows:
 - At offset 0x00 - the MFT record identifier **"FILE"**
 - At offset 0x14 - length of the header (indicates where the next attribute starts) 38 00 → 00 38 = **56 bytes!!**
 - At offset 0x1C to 0x1F - size of the entire MFT record
 - At offset 0x32 and 0x33 - the **update sequence array**, which stores the last 2 bytes of the first sector of the MFT record
 - The **update sequence array** is used as a checksum for record integrity validation

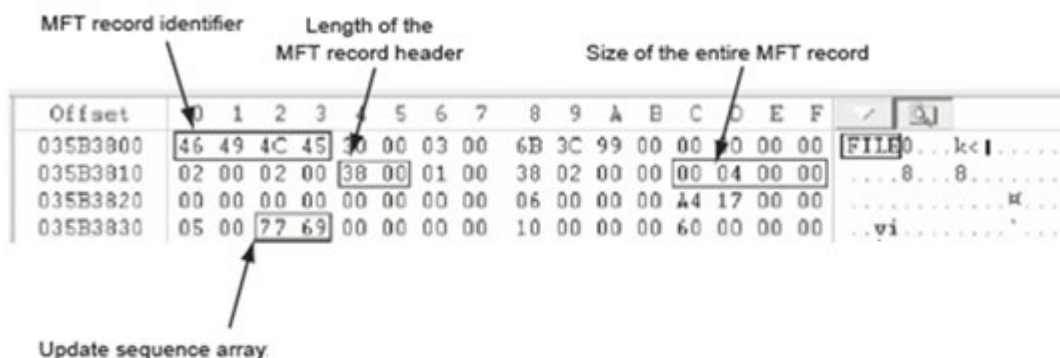


Figure 5-13 An MFT header
Courtesy of X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net

MFT Structures for File Data (cont)

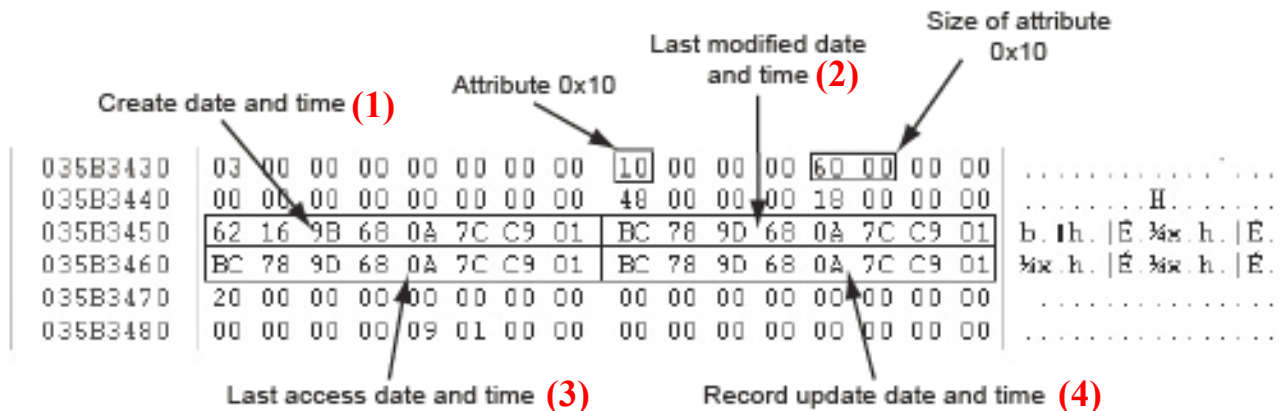


Figure 5-14 Attribute 0x10: Standard Information
 Courtesy of X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net

Standard Information attribute —

- *Create date and time (1)*
- *Last modified date and time (2)*
- *Last access date and time (3)*
- *Record update date and time (4)*

NTFS Alternate Data Streams

- **Alternate data streams**
 - Ways data can be appended to existing files
 - Can obscure valuable evidentiary data, intentionally or by coincidence
- In NTFS, an **alternate data stream** becomes an **additional file attribute**
 - Allows the file to be associated with different applications
- You can only tell whether a file has a data stream attached by examining that file's MFT entry!!

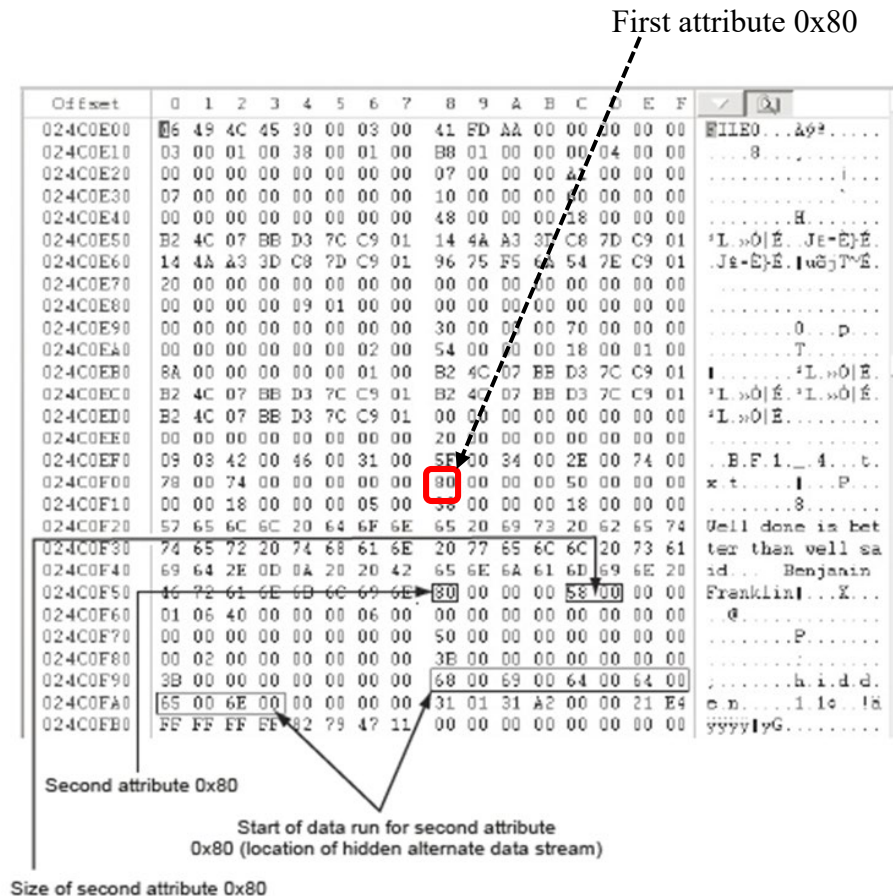


Figure 5-24 A text alternate data stream
Courtesy of X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net