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r/debian



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r/debian • 2 yr. ago
10leej

Best to to clean up /var without breakign system?

EDIT:

[This has been resolved](#). Upon investigation `docker system/image prune` for some reason was not showing 17 dangling containers. I also implemented a solution based on [this comment](#) to compress the log files and rotate tyhem on 14 days since this is a VPS I aggressive keep a backup image of.

For those curious this is a Linode VPS with only 25GB of disk space that has been left with unattended-upgrades and 2 docker containers running (using cron for automagic updates) that was running persistently since April 2020 the only times I ever ssh'd into it was to migrate it to Bullseye and really just to push an update to my blog (since I haven't automated that yet).

OP:

So my /var is up to 10GB which seems way large to me

du -hd1 comes up with

```
36K /var/tmp
4.0K /var/local
108K /var/mail
285M /var/cache
2.2M /var/backups
5.8G /var/lib
4.0K /var/opt
40K /var/spool
3.3G /var/log
9.3G /var/
```

is it safe to just rm /var/lib and /var/log?



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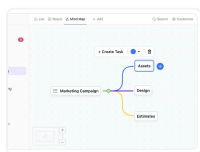
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Sort by: **Best** ▾**AlternativeOstrich7** • 2y ago

is it safe to just `rm /var/lib`

No. That will break your system.

and `/var/log`?

Removing individual log files should be fine (except that you lose information about what happened on your system). But removing `/var/log` itself will probably cause problems.

⬇️ ⬆️ 17 ⬇️ [Reply](#) ...

**gnufan** • 2y ago

Also removing individual log files doesn't fix it. Chances are there is some app not added to log rotation.

A quick "`find /var/log +size 100000 -type f`" and then check with "`head {big log file}`" to see if it started more than a week ago, then look at the syslog config to see where to drop in the extra file to rotate it weekly/daily/compress when rotated etc. Then file a bug report about the lack of log rotation....

`/Var/lib` often where your databases are....

⬆️ 9 ⬇️ [Reply](#) ...

**hictio** • 2y ago

You can reduce disk usage significantly on `/var/log/` if you compress the log files, to enable compressing, edit the configuration file `/etc/logrotate.conf` (globally) or for specific logs on the `/etc/logrotate.d/` directory.

To enable compression, un-comment the line:

```
# uncomment this if you want your log files compressed
# compress
```

Also, you can setup a more aggressive log rotation using `logrotate`. And another option is using `journalctl`.

```
sudo journalctl --disk-usage
```

Will print:

```
Archived and active journals take up 1.5G in the file system
```

You can delete everything older than 30 days: `sudo journalctl --vacuum-time=30d`.

Or keep only 2 GB of files: `sudo journalctl --vacuum-size=2G`

⬇️ ⬆️ 15 ⬇️ [Reply](#) ...

**10leej** OP • 2y ago

`sudo journalctl --vacuum-time=30d` freed up 3GB and I setup compress in `/etc/logrotate`.

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**BlakBat** • 2y ago

Do you use docker? If so I suspect that's the culprit. You can verify by doing `du -sh /var/lib/* | sort -h` and issue `docker system prune` if it's the case.

For apt, you can issue `apt-get clean`

⊖ ↑ 5 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**10leej** [OP](#) • 2y ago

```
du -sh /var/lib/* | sort -h
```

yeah using docker but calling `docker system prune` made no change

⊖ ↑ 2 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**DeliciousIncident** • 2y ago • Edited 2y ago

```
docker ps -a
docker images
docker images -a
```

Should give you a list of containers and images you have, which you can then delete with `docker rm <container>` and `docker rmi <image>`. An image can be deleted only if no container uses it, docker will give you an error otherwise.

⊖ ↑ 3 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**10leej** [OP](#) • 2y ago

Ah, there we go, I have 17 images downloaded for nginx. Thanks for the tips. I always assume runnig `docker system prune` would clean up the unused images.

⊖ ↑ 3 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**bro_can_u_even_carve** • 2y ago

`docker image prune` is what you're looking for

Also try `docker system du`

⊖ ↑ 4 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**das_tier** • 2y ago

```
docker system du
```

Did you mean `docker system df`?

⊖ ↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

**bro_can_u_even_carve** • 2y ago

Yes, thank you for the correction!

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Docker system prune is not as aggressive removing things as one may think from the name.

↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



HCharlesB • 2y ago

Another thing to check is the docker logs. The default policy is to not rotate them (*). If you've been running docker for a while, there might be log files going back years.

(*) Last I looked. I'm not sure I understand the rationale for this and when I looked into it, the settings to change this behavior were not trivial. But that is probably more me than docker.

↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



Global_Citizen_FOSS • 2y ago

Maybe you can clean some with Bleachbit.

↑ 2 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



amaraosan • 2y ago

You can remove cached apt files (if it's apt-based distro) in /var/cache, they use some space. Logs can be removed, but will grow back, it's better to see why they wasn't rotated. May be you have constantly crashing service which floods journal?

Generally, modern desktop environment may occupy up to 30-50Gb with all blows and whistles installed.

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sej7278 • 2y ago

/var/lib i bet is containers or vm's

↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



rayui • 2y ago

You didn't ask but I'm gonna tell you anyway. If disk space is an issue for you, take a look at which kernel packages/modules/headers/source you have installed and remove any you're not using. I just saved myself about 6 gigs from this alone.

⊖ ↑ -3 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



CaesarNaykid • 2y ago

How do you do that?

⊖ ↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



hictio • 2y ago

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```
dpkg --get-selections | grep linux-image
```

```
uname -a -> To see which kernel you are running.
```

Always keep at least, an extra kernel besides the one you are running.

But, plain vanilla kernels don't use the /var file system, AFAIK.

They store everything on /boot & /usr/lib/modules/.

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Pinacolada459 • 2y ago

I actually ran out of space on /var recently (using Logical Volume Management, however). Was not sure how to take care of the problem. Will check back in later with how some of the suggestions worked. Didn't know all these options existed.

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neon_overload • 2y ago • Edited 2y ago

What is the constraint you are having? How big is your drive? Is there any way you could install more storage in this system?

Nothing there is taking up an unreasonable amount of space. 10GB really isn't much these days. Note that a large proportion of your installed package code resides in /var/lib

Other than /var/lib which you can't touch, the only thing that could be trimmed there is /var/log. If you just randomly delete files in there they'll eventually grow again, so if you want that to remain smaller you'll need to adjust logrotate parameters.

You could have a look at the configurables in `/etc/systemd/journald.conf`

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S0litaire • 2y ago

Unless you've got less than 10% disk space left, then 10gb is nothing, you're ok.

my /var/ is currently 80Gb :

/var/lib/libvirt/images/ has 5 or 6 Virtual machine images which accounts for 70Gb worth of that.

⊖ ↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



10leej [OP](#) • 2y ago

It's only a 25G disk, so I had to find something

↑ 2 ↓ [Reply](#) ...



lekoli_at_work • 2y ago

If you are in a .deb package system, you can delete the apt cache directory, it will free up a few gigs.

↑ 1 ↓ [Reply](#) ...

antoniorigo4 • 2y ago