

# Trash Locked Files and Directories

by Kris Fong

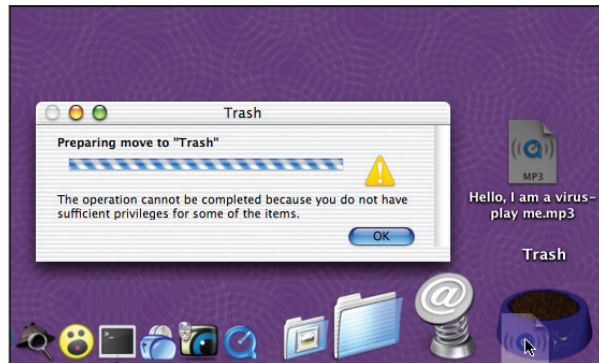


## WHAT YOU NEED

- Mac OS X (\$129, [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com))
- Administrator privileges

Taking out the trash isn't a difficult chore—just ask any nagging spouse or parent. But when it comes to tossing stuff into the Trash in Mac OS X, complications can arise. For example, if you installed Fink from our “Run Unix Apps in Mac OS X” tutorial (May/03, p64), you may have discovered that you can't budge the sw folder Fink created in the root directory.

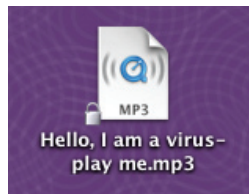
If you've ever tried to throw away a file or folder and promptly been told you didn't have the proper permission, here's how to get rid of those stubborn squatters via the Terminal. Warning: Once you dump, you can't undo.



For troublesome trash, use the Terminal to remove files and folders—now if only we could use this dialog's excuse on garbage night.

# 1 Try Unlocking First

Before you resort to chucking a file via the Terminal, try unlocking that file first—especially if you see a small padlock attached to its icon. Select the file or folder icon and press Command-I (Get Info). In the resulting window, uncheck the Locked box, close the window, and throw away the item. If there's no check in the Locked box or if the box is grayed out, read on.



**That little padlock indicates that a file's locked. Before firing up the Terminal, try unlocking the file via Get Info first.**

## 2 Journey to the Junk

To remove files or directories (aka folders), first navigate to the directory that houses them. Launch the Terminal. At the prompt, type **cd** (change directory), press the space bar, type the path to the target directory, and press Return. For example, to remove, say, some stubborn installer-log file, type **cd /Documents/"Installer Logs"** to navigate to the Installer Log folder—the parent directory. Use the list command (**ls**) to list directory contents so you can get to where you need to be. Enclose multiword file and directory

```
Last login: Mon Mar 3 13:40:05 on ttyt1
Welcome to Darwin!
[node-6-134:~] kfang% ls
Canan S230 review      Library      Public
Desktop               Movies      Sites
Documents             Music       netTunes_InstallLog.log
Icon?                Pictures
[node-6-134:~] kfang% cd Music/iTunes/"iTunes Music"
[node-6-134:~/Music/iTunes/iTunes Music] kfang% ls
Ailee Mann  Disturbed  Leon  Mindgames  Storm Inc.  Veruca Salt
Amanda Ghost  Hoobastank  Linkin Park  Misschief  Vegas DeMillo  What's This?
[node-6-134:~/Music/iTunes/iTunes Music] kfang% cd "What's This?"
[node-6-134:iTunes/iTunes Music/What's This?] kfang% ls
Hello, I am a virus-play mp.mp3
[node-6-134:iTunes/iTunes Music/What's This?] kfang% █
```

names in double quotes (""), and remember that command-line text is case sensitive.

**We used the change directory (cd) and list (ls) commands to navigate to this tenacious MP3 file.**

### 3 Fling Out Files

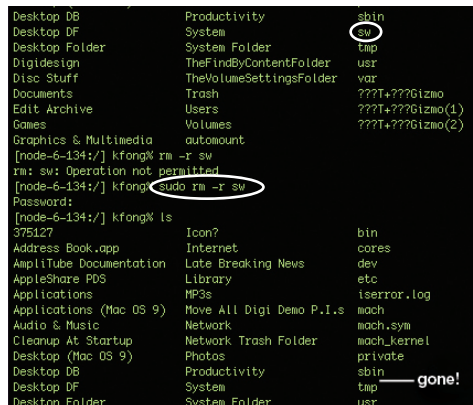
To remove a file, you generally type `rm file name`, where *file name* is the file's full name. However, with files for which you don't have privileges, OS X won't permit you to do so. To circumvent this obstacle, you must assume the role of the great and powerful root user. Type **sudo** (superuser do), press the space bar, type **rm** (remove), press the space bar again, type the file name, and press Return. At the Password prompt, type your admin password and press Return. If asked to override permissions, type **y** for yes and press Return. This will remove the file. To remove multiple files, list all the file names after the command, with a single space between file names: **sudo rm file name 1 file name 2 file name 3** and so forth.



To delete unmovable files, type **sudo** (to execute a single command as root) prior to typing **rm** (to remove directory entries).

## 4 Delete Directories

To remove a directory and its contents, navigate to its parent directory and type `sudo rm -r directory name`, where *directory name* is the full name of the directory, and press Return. For example, to remove Fink's `sw` directory, we typed `sudo rm -r sw`. When asked for an administrator password, type it in and press Return.



After listing the root directory's contents, we removed Fink's sw directory with one command.

 Kris Fong loves to talk trash but has an aversion to taking it out.