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Too many inodes: cutting the number of files in your account without breaking it

cPanel & WHM

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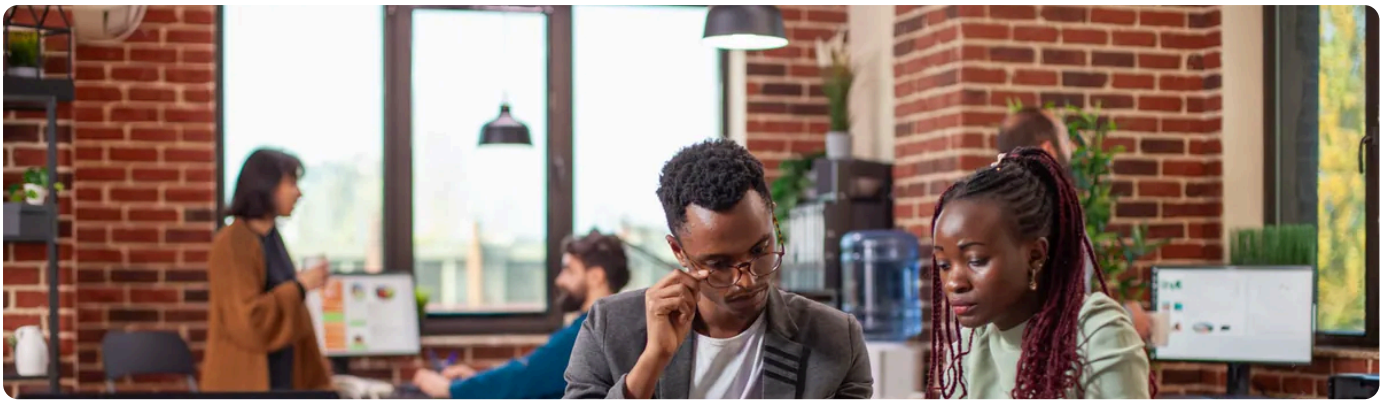

The short answer: the inode limit counts **how many** files, folders and e-mail messages the account holds, not how much they weigh. That is why you can have free space and still reach the limit. The biggest consumers are **caches with one file per page**, **e-mail** (every message is a file), **image thumbnails**, **dependency folders** and forgotten **old or test sites**. You cut them down with the tool that created the files (the caching plugin, webmail, WordPress), not by deleting folders by hand. What an inode is, and why the limit exists, is in **the limits nobody advertises**.

What uses inodes, and how to cut it without breaking anything

What uses them	How to cut it safely
Page cache (folders such as wp-content/cache or the caching plugin's own)	Use the plugin's button to purge everything, then shorten the cache lifetime and switch off variants you do not use. See **LiteSpeed Cache: the first settings**.
E-mail: years of Trash, Spam and Sent	Empty Trash and Spam in every mailbox and keep the old history elsewhere: **your mailbox is full**.
Image thumbnails (wp-content/uploads)	Do not delete them by hand: pages link to them. Switch off image sizes the theme does not use; to remove the ones already made, use a regeneration plugin, with a copy first.
Dependency folders (node_modules, .git)	If the project is built on your computer, upload only the result. **The vendor folder of a PHP application is needed for it to run: do not delete it.**
Sessions and temporary files from an application that never clears them	The fix belongs in the application, which should delete expired sessions: **PHP sessions**.
Old sites, unzipped copies, test installs	Remove them with the tool that installed them, or compress the folder into a single file, download it and delete the folder.

Step by step

1. **See the number.** In cPanel, the **Statistics** sidebar shows file usage against the account’s limit.

2. **Find where the files are.** Disk Usage shows weight, not count. With SSH (or the cPanel Terminal), the commands below only read and count files per folder. Repeat inside the folder with the biggest number until you reach the culprit.

3. **Take a copy before you delete: making a full cPanel backup**. Download it and do not leave it in the account.

4. **Start with e-mail,** which is usually the biggest slice: empty Trash and Spam in every mailbox.

5. **Clear the cache through the plugin,** not by hand, and adjust it so it does not grow without end again.

6. **Remove what should not be on the server:** old sites, test installs, node_modules of built projects. To keep an old folder, compress it in the File Manager: a .zip file counts as a single inode. Download it and delete the folder.

7	**Check in Statistics.** The count can take a little while to update after you delete.

```
du --inodes -d 1 ~ | sort -n | tail -15
du --inodes -d 1 ~/public_html | sort -n | tail -15
```

Optimise or upgrade?

Situation	Optimise or upgrade?
A cache that never expires, with thousands of old files	**Optimise.** Clearing it and shortening the lifetime fixes it.
Years of e-mail kept on the server	**Optimise first:** empty and archive elsewhere. If the team needs it all on the server, upgrade.
An application that keeps creating files (sessions, logs, temporary files)	**Optimise.** Fix the application; an upgrade would only postpone it.
A shop or gallery that grows with real products and photos	**Upgrade.** Those are files the site needs.
Several sites in the same account, each with its own files	**Upgrade,** or move the biggest site out: **several websites on one plan**.

Bigger plans

Plan	Files (inodes)
Pro	200,000
Plus	400,000
Ultra	600,000
Business Pro	1 million
Business Plus	1.5 million
Business Ultra	2 million

The limit counts files, folders and e-mail messages, and it doubles from Pro to Plus. The Business line, from 1 million to 2 million files, is for shops and sites with many products and photos. Your account's count and its limit are shown in **Statistics**; after the upgrade, the new limit appears in the same Statistics panel. How to do it: **how to upgrade your plan**; which step to pick: **which hosting plan comes next**.

Deleting files by hand inside wp-content/uploads or an application's folder can break the site: images vanish and pages throw errors. And a mass-delete command with the wrong path takes what it should not. Delete with the tool that created the files, and always with a copy.

A compressed archive counts as one file. An old folder with thousands of files that you want to keep "just in case" drops to one inode once compressed, and to zero once you download it and delete it from the account.

Cannot find what is using up the files? Open a support ticket with the domain and the number you see in Statistics.

Open a support ticket

SEE ALSO

The limits nobody advertises: inodes, processes and memory

Disk Usage: finding what fills your account

Your mailbox is full: what to delete and how to stop it happening

Disk space nearly full on your hosting plan: what to delete first, step by step

Usage warnings at 75%, 85% and 95%: what our e-mails mean and what to do next

Which hosting plan comes next: upgrading Pro, Plus, Ultra and Business for more room

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