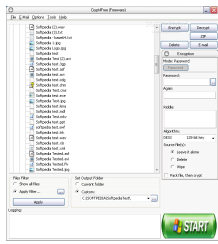


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The main window of Crypt4Free

## Crypt4Free - All Your Secrets Belong to Us

### *Secure sensitive data with just a few clicks*

Just about every computer user has some sort of data that he or she would like to keep secure and out of sight. While hiding your data is nigh impossible, there are many ways to make it unreadable to others, ranging from packing it with a software utility that adds a password on top of the resulting archive and going to full file or folder encryption, where the entire data chunk is parsed and encrypted. There are many encryption tools out there and each of them uses one or more specialized algorithms in order to protect your data against unauthorized access. Today, we are reviewing such a program, named Crypt4Free, and just as its name suggests, it can be used free of any charge. This is really good news as most tools that offer any type of high grade encryption are pretty expensive. From the start, it is worth mentioning that Crypt4Free is compatible with just about any version of the Microsoft Windows operating system, meaning that even users that still have computers running older versions of Windows will have no hassle protecting their files and folders. Crypt4Free comes packed in a 3.3MB installation kit and when installed, it does not get much bigger. It also sports a clean interface that increases usability. As encrypting a file or folder is usually a multi step procedure, Crypt4Free is designed to present an intuitive graphical user interface. Looking from left to right, we can see the detected drives arranged in a tree fashion and two command panels as well as a big and green "Start" button. Using Crypt4Free is really easy, all you have to do is simply navigate to the desired file or folder using the drive tree representation, select the desired data and then click the desired button on the right panel. This panel comes with several buttons, each corresponding to possible actions like "encrypt", "decrypt", "zip", "delete" and "email". Clicking any of these buttons will alter the panel in showing some previously hidden controls that allow users to customize the desired action. Encrypting a file or folder means parsing its content and applying a previously selected algorithm. Crypt4Free is able to use two such algorithms, the weaker DESX that is implemented using a 128-bit key and the much stronger Blowfish that uses a 448-bit key. Users will need to enter a password and then confirm it. This password will be used to encrypt the data and a password reminder in the form of a riddle can be added, too. As the successfulness of the encryption depends somewhat on the password chosen, Crypt4Free has a number of nice features that are directly dealing with passwords. A "virtual keyboard" window is also available and here users can create their own password, or they can use the "generate" feature in order to come up with a completely random string of characters that is made up using one of the three available hash functions: SHA1, RIPEMD160 and WHIRPOOL. The user or machine generated password can also be saved to a file for later use. Crypt4Free can apply a number of default actions to the source file or folder after the encryption process takes place. Users will have the opportunity to either leave the source data alone, as it is, or delete it. A "wipe" option is also available and it means that the source data will be securely deleted from the drive, any attempt to recover the unprotected information been impossible. The lower part of the Crypt4Free window contains three main components: the data input and output area, the logging area and a big and green "start" button that is pretty much self explaining. The input and output data area exist in order to offer the user the possibility to define filters, showing either all files and folders or selecting them based on extension, size, etc. The output directory is the place where the packed and encrypted data is saved and by default, Crypt4Free chooses the very same directory where it reads the aforementioned information. This can be quickly changed with just a few mouse clicks. The logging area is where Crypt4Free shows us what happens during the encryption or decryption processes. Here, users can see the total amount of processed data as well as

the processing speed and the eventual errors encountered. As Crypt4Free can also email the protected or source data files, a client email program is required in order to take advantage of all its features. After encrypting data, this handy software utility can do the reverse process too, transforming a protected file or folder into human or computer readable data. The decryption process is conditioned by the presence of a password, as Crypt4Free has no decrypting capabilities by force. Just like the encrypting process, the reverse operation can benefit from passwords saved in special files, as users will find it hard to remember one of the machine generated passwords. For small files and folders, Crypt4Free is really fast, the entire encrypting or decrypting process taking only a second or two. As for larger amounts of data however, things are different, and the computing power of your machine will be put to good use. Apart from the hardware relation to the length of the encrypting and decrypting process, the type of file/files that is/are going to be processed is important too, as document files will take the least amount of time, while executables and video or music file types will take longer. While a user could practically make good use of Crypt4Free without ever needing to access the main menus, they are placed there for a reason, as they offer options that are not immediately visible in the main application window. A nice to use feature that can be found in the "Email" menu is the ability to write down a piece of text and then encrypt and email it, in fact giving the user the ability to write completely secure emails. Another notable feature is "Clear computer history", one that can be accessed from the "Tools" menu. It will simply clean up all kind of temporary data files like cookies, Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer caches and Microsoft Windows temporary files and folders. **The Good** Crypt4Free does what its name suggests and even more. The fact that it is distributed as freeware software is a strong point in its favor, just as its ease of use and nice features. **The Bad** As far as free programs go, Crypt4Free does a very good job, but it only implements two encryption algorithms and three hash functions for automated password generation. Although the used encryption algorithms are pretty good, they have well known exploits, so a truly determined attacker could still gain access to the protected data. **The Truth** Crypt4Free is, in my opinion, the perfect encrypting and decrypting program when you need a fast, free and easy to use application. Although not well suited for truly secure documents and such, Crypt4Free will offer an adequate level of protection for your data when paired with strong and hard to guess passwords. All in all, I give it a four star rating. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*