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## [Your HDD Is Missing a Slice?](#)

### *Try TestDisk for a change*

By data recovery we understand that it is a process of saving data from inaccessible primary media when it cannot be accessed normally. You can recover data from various storage media devices (hard disk drives, CDs, DVDs, RAID, etc.). Usually the data is lost due to physical damage or because of some logical damage to the file system. There are three ways you can lose data: by deleting, formatting or overwriting. Deleting and formatting are the only situations when you can recover the files. Overwriting however does not give you that chance. You may have heard rumors that even overwritten data can be recovered, but there is no solid evidence on that. Actually, no data recovery company today claims that it can recover overwritten information. One type of software that proves to be useful in such cases (deletion or formatting) is GetDataBack. If you want to read the Softpedia review, click [here](#). Today I found another similar software, only this one is absolutely FREE as it is an open source. The name is TestDisk and it is designed to help recover lost partitions and make non-bootable disks work again. Sounds good, doesn't it? The file will take a little over 2MB of your disc space. The package also contains PhotoRec, which is also data recovery software for recovering lost pictures, video, documents and archives. Both applications are developed by Christophe Grenier. TestDisk runs under DOS, Windows (NT 4, 2000, XP and 2003), Linux, FreeBSD, NetBSD, OpenBSD, SunOS and MacOS. The software can recover lost partitions on various file systems, among which we find FAT, NTFS, LVM and LVM 2, Mac partition map, UFS and UFS 2, Linux RAID, DOS/WINDOWS FAT 12/16/32 etc. The more inexperienced users may get a little intimidated by the "interface" as it presents itself as a classical DOS window. But do not despair as all you have to do is follow the instructions and make your choices. However, you have to be a little careful with what you choose and read some documentation, as some of the options are not very easy to get. The user does not have to install the software; he just has to extract the archived files, search for the testdisk.exe file and run it. The first window will present the options for log creating. All the information that TestDisk gathers can be stored in a .log file which contains the TestDisk options, technical information and outputs. Choose between Create, Append and No Log. Next step is choosing the media you want to rescue. You have to pay attention to the capacity of the disk/s and see if it has been correctly detected by the software. If the disk size is not detected correctly, you can check BIOS hdd settings and the jumpers. Next, you have to select the partition table type. After this, the options are: Analyze, Advanced (with Filesystem Utils), Geometry (change the disk geometry), Options (modify), MBR Code and Delete. Analyze option makes an analysis of the partition structure and seeks for partitions (Intel, Mac, None - small media without partition, Sun and Xbox) next it will make a file system check and will proceed to the partition recovery, scanning all relevant cylinders. Choosing Geometry option will enable the user to change the hard disk geometry parameters (CHS). You have to be careful inside this menu as the Sector Size option is very dangerous to modify. TestDisk looks for partitions and calculates the sizes; this is why it is important to have the correct disk geometry. The Options menu contains the Expert Mode section which adds some functionalities, the Cylinder Boundary (the partitions are aligned on cylinder boundaries), Allow partial last Cylinder, Dump (dumps the essential sectors) and OK (saves the changes and returns to the main menu). MBR Code command (Master Boot Record) allows TestDisk to overwrite the code area necessary for booting the OS. You can use this option if your system does not boot. Using TestDisk for writing the MBR code will result in displaying TestDisk on the boot screen. The Delete option will delete all partition table data from Intel Partition Table only. Be careful with the software, as the

developer does not give any warranty whatsoever and does not assume responsibility for the damage it may produce on your hard drive. **The Good!**It's a good thing the software exists and that it is free. It contains the necessary options to recover your partitions. With a little documentation everybody can use it. **The Bad!**The software is not accessible to all users, as it is a little difficult to comprehend all the terminology and functionalities. You need to document yourself on matters like CHS and generally hard disc related issues. **The Truth!** must admit that I am impressed by the software. It is pretty simple to be used by experienced users and the novices need about three hours of documentation (I guess). The developer has given up the interface in the advantage of the utility. I'm sure it won't let you down; you just have to put your back into it a little bit. If what you need is just some file recovery software you can use the PhotoRec application that comes with TestDisk (it is exactly the opposite of TestDisk in terms of use difficulty). *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*