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## [WinAce VS WinRAR VS WinZip](#)

### *As small as it gets*

Some like to say that size doesn't matter, but when it comes to files on my computer, I must certainly disagree. Everybody uses different types of files, most of them are compressed, but still... a DOC, BMP or WAV is sometimes necessary, although their size is a lot bigger than other file types in their category. So what do we do to bring their size closer to these kind of files? We, of course, shrink them by using a compression tool. I went on Softpedia's Compression Tools category and sorted shareware archivers by downloads. The top three programs were: WinRAR, WinAce, WinZip. Before I start making an analysis on them, I must mention two things: First of all, this review is mostly a guide for beginners, so they should know what to expect (that's why I did not made complex tests about their performance, just compressed a few types of files that almost anybody uses); second: I did not use only my personal computer for these tests (not everybody has a 3200 MHz processor and I felt the need to present realistic compression times, but also confirmed on another computer).

**WinZip** Probably the archiver everyone has heard about, WinZip presents itself as a very user friendly and easy to use application. The main screen has a simple interface, with buttons for the most important functions at the top. Although the buttons (as functionality, but also as design) are very good choices, the fact that they're not customizable (you cannot remove the text or make them smaller) is an important minus. The first thing you'll notice missing will probably be the file browser. You cannot browse through your computer inside WinZip; if you want to open an archive, you'll have to use the Open button (or CTRL+O). The menus in WinZip are not very well balanced. Browsing through them, you will surely realize that the only one you'll use often is Actions. The Actions menu contains all important functions of WinZip: adding, deleting, viewing, extracting an archive and also other tools such as: Virus scan, split, encrypt, test, make .exe, UUencode, etc. The configuration window covers view, toolbar, system, explorer enhancements, program locations and other miscellaneous options. Displayed in tabs and therefore very easy to browse, the options cover the essential aspects of the program's configuration. Currently, WinZip's 10th major version supports the following file formats: arc, arj, b64, bhx, cab, gz, hqx, lzh, mim, tar, taz, tgz, tz, uu, uue, xxe, z and zip. But, and this is where WinZip loses a lot of ground, it will archive files only to the zip format.

**Compression** The keyword for WinZip on this chapter is: Speed! This is the only thing WinZip is really good at. In all tests, for video, audio, image and text, WinZip was the winner on compression time. The video was compressed 3 times faster (at maximum compression) and even 5 times faster (at normal compression). The audio and image files took longer to compress using PPMd (maximum) compression and less with bzip2 (again maximum), although for the video file it was the other way around, but in the end, the fastest compression will beat the WinAce time and, of course, WinRAR. Even for text files the difference is noticeable: at maximum compression WinZip finishes 1-2 seconds earlier and at normal compression even 3 seconds earlier.

**WinAce** The first thing you see when starting WinAce for the first time is the bluish very user friendly interface. I must confess that WinAce was the first archiver I used, just because of this. I really didn't care back then about compression time and size. What I dislike about its interface is the buttons. Why? Because not only that they're big and take a lot of screen space, but some of them could have been replaced by other buttons, with much more useful functions (and not anybody knows or thinks of customizing a toolbar). The menus in WinAce are a plus, but also a minus. The plus is that they offer a lot of tools, a lot of options for viewing and for the archive. But sadly, when right-clicking on a file inside WinAce you get... the Windows menu.

Why not a WinAce personalized context menu? The archiving tools and functions are quite numerous. You can: e-mail, encrypt, lock, test, convert, repair, protect, scan, optimize, create SFX archives (executable) or add authenticity verification. The options in WinAce are also a plus. Well organized in tabs, they try to give users as much customizing power as possible, from supported archives, to shell integration, icons and compression parameters. WinAce supports the following file types: ace, zip, arj, lzh, rar, cab, arc, gz, tar, jar, tgz, lha, zoo, uue, iso, bz2, xxe, mim and xef, but it will only archive to: ace, lzh, cab, jar, gz, tar, tar.gz and zip.

**Compression** WinAce does an excellent job at compressing video files. Although the compression time is not long, the archives created with WinAce are half the size of the ones created with WinRAR and even thirty times smaller than the ones created using WinZip. Unfortunately, this is the only file format where WinAce excels. In the text, image and audio tests WinAce failed to impress, the compression time being very close to the one achieved by WinRAR, often longer, and the archive size always smaller than WinRAR's.

**WinRAR About WinRAR** This little archiver has a very practical user interface. You can easily reduce the size of the buttons which offer you the basic operations for an archive: extract, test, repair, find, etc. The menus offer access to important archive commands (like extract, test, comment, protect, lock), but also other important tools such as scan, convert or benchmark and hardware test. The options are not as numerous as in WinZip and WinAce, but like all other aspects of WinRAR, they are practical and cover the basic needs for properly configuring an archiver. WinRAR supports the following file formats: rar, zip, cab, arj, lzh, ace, 7-zip, tar, gzip, uue, bz2, jar, iso, z and will compress files to .rar, .zip and to self-extracting .exe

**Compression** With WinZip out of the picture from the beginning and WinAce winner only for video files, you can easily guess what the results were for WinRAR. It's quite amazing what this small app can do to your uncompressed files. During testing not only did it have a much faster compression speed than WinAce, but the file sizes were a lot smaller too. This makes WinRAR the winner in the battle for smaller files in the shortest time possible.

**The details** For those of you who would still like to know some details about these tests here are some important facts: The testing was done using two computers, one with a 3200+ AMD64 processor, the other one with a 1500 Pentium processor. The results mentioned above were from a tiff file, a mov file and a wav file. WinAce compressed the video file in 17-18 seconds to 188KB. To compress the audio file to 46.6MB it took 48 seconds at maximum compression and 24 seconds at normal compression. The image file was compressed at 47.9MB in 44 seconds at normal compression and 47 seconds at maximum compression. Please notice the fact that the although compressed to the maximum, the file size did not change significantly. WinRAR compressed the mov file to 458KB in 17 seconds at maximum compression and to 399KB in 14 seconds at normal compression. The wav was archived in 18-19 seconds to 44.9MB at maximum compression and 45.9 at normal compression. The tiff file was compressed in 47 seconds to 47.6MB In 6 seconds, WinZip archived the same video file to 2.05MB at maximum compression and 5.59MB at normal compression in 3 seconds. Using bzip2 compression the audio file was shrunk to 59.2MB in 30 seconds for maximum compression and to 61.7MB in 9 seconds using normal compression. As for the image file, using again bzip2 compression, it was archived to 47.7MB in 27 seconds at maximum compression and in 7 seconds using normal compression.