How Do I Remove a Hard Drive from a Computer (Desktop PC)?

In order to ensure that any residual Institutional Data on the Hard Drive of a Computer being recycled is handled securely, UWO asks that you remove the Hard Drive from all Computers to be recycled. Once the Hard Drive has been removed from the Computer, the remainder of the Computer can be placed into a UWO/FM-supplied Electronics Disposal blue box, found in various locations around Campus.

The removed Hard Drive should be taken to and deposited within one of the new Secure Media Destruction collection boxes. These boxes can be found at the following Campus locations:

- **ITS Help Desk** (4th Floor, Support Services Building)
- **University Community Centre** (1st floor, near room 147B)
- **Spencer Engineering Building** (1st floor, near the Loading Dock)

The items deposited in the Secure Media Destruction boxes will be collected and provided to the ITS Security Team who will remove all data on the device, via Degaussing. Once the data has been removed, the Hard Drive can then be added into the Electronics Disposal stream. The University employs a 3rd party Electronics Recycler who will decompose and ethically recycle the component parts of the collected items, following Provincial guidelines for Electronics Recycling (Ontario Electronics Stewardship).

You will need a Phillips Screwdriver (+) to undo the screws mentioned in this procedure.

**Step 1:** Examine the back of the Computer and ensure that all cables have been removed, before you start to take apart the Computer case.
**Step 2:** Open the Computer case. This differs between Computer manufacturers. Some involve side panels (most common) while others will require one or two buttons to be pressed allowing the case to be opened like a clam shell. The Owner’s manual may assist with a description of how to open the Computer case.

In the pictured example, using a Phillips Screwdriver, remove both side panels of the case by removing two screws from each side (see above, circled in red). Once the screws have been removed, the panel may need to be pulled backwards slightly in order to disengage it from the main case. Set the two panels and four screws aside as these will be used to re-attach the panels to the case, after the Hard Drive has been removed.

**Step 3:** With the side panels removed, you will need to locate the Computer Hard Drive within the case and start to undo its connections to the main board. Each Hard Drive connects with two cables which need to be pulled and jiggled as needed to have these cable come free. No tools should be required to remove these cables.

The Hard Drive is typically screwed into a metal cage within the case, usually with two screws in each side. Remove the pair of screws from each side. See screws highlighted in red circles with the Hard Drive and its cables shown with a red arrow (below, right picture):
Step 4: Once the screws holding the Hard Drive to the metal cage have been removed from both sides and the cables have been removed from the back end of the Hard Drive, the Hard Drive is ready to slide backwards out of the metal cage. You may find this to be a very congested area, be careful not to scrape your fingers or to break a fingernail. Patience helps!

The picture below shows the Hard Drive mostly slid out from the frame; pulling out a little further will free the Hard Drive from the cage.

Step 5: Complete the removal of the Hard Drive from the Computer; it should be free of all attachments to the Computer.

Step 6: Once the Hard Drive has been removed from the Computer, you can re-attach the side panels to the main case using the screws removed during Step 2. The Computer is now ready to be placed into the nearest UWO/FM-supplied Electronics Disposal blue box. The removed Hard Drive can be placed in one of the new locked Secure Media Destruction boxes, at the locations listed above.
How Do I Remove a Hard Drive from a Computer (Laptop PC)?

For the most part, removing a Hard Drive from a Laptop Computer is simple and straight-forward. A Phillips Screwdriver will also be needed for this task although a smaller / finer point Screwdriver may be needed.

**Step 1:** Turn off the Laptop and disconnect any power cords or other wired attachments. Turn over the Laptop.

**Step 2:** Look for access panels on the back of the Laptop. Quite often there are two of these: one to access the memory cards installed in the device and the other to provide access to the internal Hard Drive. This second access panel is one you will want to open. Undo the one of more Phillips screws holding the access panel cover in place and remove this cover.

Note how easy it is to be fooled! The above picture shows that where the Hard Drive was thought to be was actually where the manufacturer put the memory cards. A search using Mr. Google quickly identified where the Hard Drive was located on this particular Dell Laptop model.

The second red circle, added in the lower left picture, shows which screw is used to open the access to the Laptop Hard Drive on this specific model.
**Step 3:** With the access panel cover removed, you should be looking at the Hard Drive which needs to be removed. This Hard Drive is usually held in place by another **Phillips** screw which will also need to be unscrewed before you can remove the Hard Drive from the Laptop.

**Step 4:** Slide the Hard Drive back from the socket it plugs into, after the anchoring screw is removed in **Step 3**. This will only need to slide a short distance (~ 1/4”) in order to become free from the socket. Lift out the Laptop Hard Drive from the access panel. Replace the access panel cover and re-install the screw(s).

Again, in the pictured example, there is even less involved. Once the single screw is removed, the Hard Drive pulls out without any additional steps.

**Step 5:** The Laptop is now ready to be placed in your nearest UWO/FM-supplied **Electronics Disposal** box. The Laptop Hard Drive can be placed in one of the new locked **Secure Media Destruction** boxes, at the locations indicated above.

**Note:** Laptop Hard Drives are typically smaller (2.5” versus 3.5”) than the Hard Drives found in Desktop Computers.

If you find that these instructions do not represent the machine in your possession or you simply cannot determine how to complete some portion of these instructions, please reach out to the **ITS Help Desk** for assistance.

**ITS Help Desk** -- Support Services Building -- “Just inside the front doors of Support Service Building”

519-661-3800  or  Ext. 83800 on Campus
What other items require special handling to ensure “No Institutional Data Loss?"

The new Secure Media Destruction boxes can also be used as a drop-off point for any other items that require special handling in order to ensure that no Institutional Data escapes the Campus. The following items will be dealt with, by the ITS Security Team, when deposited into one of these secured boxes:

- Cell Phones, Smart Phones
- Computer Pads, Tablets
- Computer Tapes, Data Cartridges
- Floppy Disks of all types and sizes
- USB Drives, External Hard Drives (may need to be removed from it’s enclosure)

If you are unsure about whether an item may need this secured handling, call the ITS Help Desk for advice!

What do I get for my trouble?

For doing your part to help ensure that the Institution’s valuable data is not lost through casual equipment disposal, you will have earned our thanks and gratitude for participating in this new effort! Be sure to tell your friends and colleagues to help increase the effectiveness of this program.

Thank you!