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Trek ThumbDrive

Alex Kidman - 11/07/2000

Removable storage is great, as long as you don't mind splashing out for drives on every system you're likely to use and then carrying them around. Trek's ThumbDrive is aimed at those who want to avoid both limitations.

The ThumbDrive is little more than a chunk of memory in a solid plastic case with a USB connector at one end. Despite its connector, this drive only runs on Windows 98.

Installation of the ThumbDrive was exceedingly easy, but the claim on the box that it needs 'no software' is rather deceptive, as drivers must be installed. Once that's done, it appears as a regular removable drive within Windows Explorer. Files can be copied to or from the drive, as well as permanently deleted. Drive scanning is done through a separate application supplied on floppy disk. Scanning deletes all data on the ThumbDrive. This is made very clear before scanning takes place.

Once installed, the only physical change you can make to the ThumbDrive (apart from unplugging it) is to lock it with a very small catch at the back. A small green light on the side of the unit is the only indicator that the ThumbDrive is working. The light flashes when the drive is being accessed, and is permanently on the rest of the time.

APC tested the drive by transferring data between a desktop system and a notebook, and found it extremely useful and quick. However, there is one catch. The ThumbDrive unit is about the size of a packet of chewing gum. As such, it's wider than the normal USB connector, and if your USB ports are close together (as is normal for desktop machines), it can be a tight squeeze to get the ThumbDrive in. We managed (with some pushing), but we weren't happy that we'd had to force it into the port. This could also be a problem for notebooks with low USB ports.

The ThumbDrive comes in a variety of sizes, from 8M to 256M. The unit APC tested was 32M and file transfers were extremely fast. It took just over a minute and a half to fill the drive to capacity, but copying smaller individual files took a lot longer.

The ThumbDrive is reasonably priced, and beats almost every other option for portable storage we've seen -- as long as it fits onto your system.

Contact	AGA Technologies
Phone	(08) 9301 5055
Web	http://www.agate.com.au/
Price	\$279 for 32M version
Pros	Quick set up Good variety of storage sizes
Cons	Bulky design

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