

TimeMachine mobile backup eats up disk space if backup drive unavailable

Apple introduced a new feature called "mobile backups" with OS X Lion.

The idea behind that: Use a temporary part of the local hard drive to store backups until the backup drive is connected again.

True, this is a good feature for most. But if you can spare some backups, because you - let's say - store your files to a dropbox folder, which is synchronized to a cloud service, then you may not need the mobile backup feature of OS X.

In fact, you may notice running out of disk space, that you could use otherwise.

So to see the difference, let's check out the available free disk space in Termin us the 'df' (disk free) utility:

```
gianpaolo-del-mattos-macbook-pro:~ Gianpaolo$ df -h
Filesystem      Size  Used Avail Capacity  Mounted on
/dev/disk0s2    79Gi  69Gi  9.1Gi   89%    /
devfs           129Ki 129Ki   0Bi  100%   /dev
map -hosts      0Bi   0Bi   0Bi  100%   /net
map auto_home   0Bi   0Bi   0Bi  100%   /home
localhost:/SkA_FxsNwtVofJZZOc308I 79Gi  79Gi   0Bi  100%   /Volumes/MobileBackups
```

Gosh, I'm almost out of space, having only 9 Gigs left :-/

So let's get rid of the mobile backups using this command:

```
sudo tmutl disablelocal
```

Now check back at the disk space:

```
gianpaolo-del-mattos-macbook-pro:~ Gianpaolo$ df -h
Filesystem      Size  Used Avail Capacity  Mounted on
/dev/disk0s2    79Gi  60Gi  18Gi   77%    /
devfs           129Ki 129Ki   0Bi  100%   /dev
map -hosts      0Bi   0Bi   0Bi  100%   /net
map auto_home   0Bi   0Bi   0Bi  100%   /home
```

You notice, that the '/Volumes/MobileBackups' mount point is gone?

I'm having 18 Gigs free now as well.

So, depending on how long you didn't have your backup drive connected, the amount used may well increase to a multiple of that.

It may not be best choice for most people to have mobile backups disabled. But if you DO know what you're doing, then go for it ;-)