



## GeekSpeak

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The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals.

### One Tool You Should Have

**Arguably,** the most important utility you need in your tool box is a compression program.

Its primary use, of course, is to enable you to receive and send files properly. Nothing will frustrate a client more than receiving a file of several megabytes that could have been a tenth of the size or even less if it had been sent in a compressed format.

Some file formats—such as text-based files or bitmaps—are particularly well suited for compression because they can be minimized significantly; others—such as JPG, GIF, or PDF—shrink very little because they are already compressed.

An Internet search reveals that there may very well be as many different programs in existence as there are word combinations containing the word “zip”—ZipMagic, PowerZip, Quick Zip, ZipGenius, BitZipper, ALZip, and TurboZip form only the tip of the iceberg. Add to that PKZIP from the “inventor” of the zip format, and the market leader WinZip, which is now owned by Corel. And, yes, there is still a plethora of compression programs that do not contain the word “zip.”

I recently replaced my long-time personal choice, ZipGenius, with the powerful 7-Zip (see [www.7-zip.org](http://www.7-zip.org)), a utility that works with a much larger number of compressed file formats and has other advanced features that I like (along with the price tag—it is free!). As with most other programs of its kind, it is closely integrated with Windows/File Explorer: a right-click on any file, group of files, or folder(s) gives you access to the program. (Both Windows and Mac computers also come with a compression program, but in each case it is very limited, so you should not rely on it completely.)

Other important reasons for using compression programs? They allow you to send one file instead of many (this also makes it easier for your clients). Compressed files can be sent as password-protected files for safety reasons. And you can split large ZIP files into smaller chunks so they fit in an e-mail, on a CD, or a USB stick. (When you want to use the file(s), the tools allow you to reassemble them into the original file[s] again.)

Of course, all of this is old news. But here is the bonus if you have made it this far without turning the page or falling asleep: tools such as WinRAR, ZipGenius, and 7-Zip are particularly helpful for translators because they can help you “crack” certain files and get to translatable content. This enables you to process the file more easily in translation environment tools (TEnTs) without the need to purchase the often expensive program in which the file was originally created.

The compressed format that follows the commonly used ZIP algorithms is widely used by a broad range of file formats, including files in Office 2007 and above (DOCX, XLSX, etc.), the OpenOffice/LibreOffice formats, Flash FLA files, InfoPath files, and many, many more. These compressed files often contain complex folder structures with files that are easily translated.

Simply rename the originating file to a \*.zip file and unzip it (leaving the folder structure intact), locate the \*.xml files (they could also have other extensions) with the translatable text, and translate them (in a text

editor or, even better, in a translation environment tool). Then place the translated \*.xml files into their original folder, zip the whole folder structure up again, rename it from \*.zip to whatever the original extension was, and you are done.

Even more interesting is the fact that many of the TEnT-specific packages (files that contain the translation files, the translation memory, and the termbases) that you receive from your clients may also be ZIP files, even though their extensions do not indicate that.

Tools such as Trados (2007 and Studio), Transit, Déjà Vu, memoQ, and others can produce these files. Obviously, the tool vendors would like you to stay in their environments, but you can circumvent this by following the same process I described above. Naturally you will need to know which are translatable files and what you should be doing with the other files, but, hey, if you can translate rocket science manuals, you can surely figure this out as well.

How do you know whether a file is a ZIP file? With one of my favorite tricks—open any file in a text editor (such as Notepad) to see the underlying code. If the first two characters in the code are “PK” (standing for Philip Katz, who developed the zip format), it is a ZIP file. Now, please **do not save** that file in your text editor. Instead, exit without saving, rename the extension to ZIP, unzip it, and you will see what I mean.

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*Jost is the co-author of Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation.*