Microsoft Windows - Restore Access to a Write-Protected Hard Drive

During a bit of housecleaning today, I uncovered an old **USB** hard drive I hadn't used in a couple years. I decided to plug it in, check the contents, and see if it contained anything I still needed.

As it turned out, the drive was filled with a bunch of old, unwanted files. Great, I thought, I'll just delete them and put the drive back into use for other things.

Just one problem: when I tried to erase the files, _Windows_ popped up an error message about the drive being **write-protected**. Uh, okay. Not sure why that would be, but whatever. Guess I'll just go ahead and format the drive. That'll clear everything out.

Whoops! Same error. Oh, **Windows**, you baffling, unpredictable, endlessly annoying operating system, you. (**FYI**, I'm running **Windows 7 64-bit**. The drive was most likely formatted using a _32-bit version_ of **Windows XP**. Maybe that had something to do with it.)

I spent some time investigating varies fixes for this problem, which can affect any kind of drive, and landed on the following:

1. Open a Command prompt by clicking _Start_, typing **command**, and clicking _Command Prompt_.

2. Type **diskpart** and press **Enter**.

3. Type **list volume** and press **Enter**.

4. Type **select volume #**, where # is the number of the drive that's giving you the "_write-protected_" error. In my case, I ended up typing **select volume 3**.

5. Type **attributes disk clear readonly** and press **Enter**.

6. Type **exit** and press **Enter**.

That's it! Now you should have full write access to the problem drive. This worked for me; let us know if you have different results.

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