

# If you don't back up, you can't get it back!

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There are two kinds of people: Those who back up, and those who will.

That is one of my favorite expressions about the importance of backing up the data that is stored on your computer.

Computers store data – all files, photos, music, emails, etc. – on the internal hard drive inside laptops and desktop. Studies show that hard drives will fail. It is not a matter of ‘if’ but ‘when.’ Most hard drives contain small discs that spin, and like all moving parts, the day will come when the discs will spin no more. Will you be prepared?

It is important to understand that backup is a process. As long as new data is being created and changes are being made, backups also need to be updated.

There are two types of backup plans, local and off-site. A local backup is usually kept attached to your computer via a wired connection or on the local network. Off-site, or online backups, are stored on a server that could be

hundreds or thousands of miles away, and files are transferred via the internet. Each has advantages and disadvantages, which I will explain.

## **LOCAL BACKUP**

This is becoming easier, as prices of external hard drives are still falling as their capacities increase. External USB drives are available at any office supply or electronics store. You will want to buy a drive that has a storage capacity that is at least the same as your computer's hard drive. For example, if your laptop has a 1TB hard drive, get an external USB Drive that is 1TB or larger.

This extra room will be used for incremental backups and will assure that you do not run out of space. Most USB drives have software that will automatically backup your computer, and allow you to select the files to be backed up and the frequency of backups. A 2TB external hard drive can be found for under \$90, and external drives as large as 5TB are now available for under \$120!

If you have a Windows PC, you can find the backup program by going to the Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools, and then click Backup.

If you have a Mac, the built-in Time Machine software will open when you connect an external drive and ask you if that is the drive that you want to use for backup.

## **OFF-SITE BACKUP**

There are several services that offer online backup services, you can search for 'online backups' and see what is available. Costs start at around \$30 annually and are usually based on storage capacity, so the larger the storage needed, the higher the annual cost. I personally use the service provided by CrashPlan ([crashplan.com](http://crashplan.com)). They allow backup of not only your computer but

also connected external hard drives, so if you keep photos or music on a separate drive, that will be safe as well if a local crash occurs.

You can also backup multiple computers under their affordable family plans. Another feature I like is the App for tablets and smartphones. It allows access to any backed-up files from anywhere using your portable device. So if you need a photo that is on your desktop in Naples, and you are in New York, just open the app on your device and you can display, save and print that photo!

## **WHICH BACKUP IS FOR YOU?**

Local backups using a connected drive are fast, inexpensive and convenient. However, if a disaster such as flood, fire or electrical surge occur, both your computer and backup could be damaged.

Online backups are becoming faster and also less expensive. They are convenient as they can be accessed with any online connection, but be sure to make sure that the service's default backup plan includes the documents and settings important to you.

In closing, remember that a backup is only as useful as the last time it was performed – if your computer crashes and the most recent backup you have is from 2010, that may not be of much help.

May you have 1,000 backups and never need one.

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