

Computer Tips

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Backing Up Your Data—1

In this new little series of our articles, we will discuss one area of using a computer that many of us, including myself, could improve in. What is that, you may ask? Well, its backing up your data. I want to take you through the several different ways of backing up your data, what you should, and what you should not backup, and recommend the best media or storage to use for your backups.

It happens. Your hard drive might crash. Thieves might steal your laptop at a café. You might realize on Friday that you desperately need the now-departed Wednesday version of an important document that you sat up late Thursday night altering.

At times like these, having a secure, up-to-date backup of your hard drive files can be a lifesaver. Surprisingly, it is not difficult to backup, and maybe this is why many of us don't remember to do it.

So, we want to backup. But what do you backup? Your hard drive may contain hundreds of thousands of files. Many of them should be backed up every day, others only occasionally, and still others--including temp files, the temporary sleep cache, and your browser/s cache--not at all. Let's look at the different kinds of files individually.

Your documents: You should back up your word processing files, spreadsheets, and similar documents every day. This is especially true for office computers, where documents form the basis of the office work. However, even home computers, where kids do their homework, at-home uni students, and even hobbyists with a list of their favourite websites, all should be backed daily or after changing.

Your photos and music: While photos and music are not changed like documents, your photos and music should be backed up at least every time you add new photos or music files.

Your emails and contact list: Always high on your list will be your emails and contact addresses. While not as easy to locate as your other files, the storage folders and files for your emails and contact lists can and should be backed up regularly.

Your programs: Most programs can be reinstalled if you do suffer a hard drive crash or a break-in, so it is not always necessary that these be backed up. However, some programs store your data (eg. older versions of Quickbooks) with the application folder, so as a rule we always backup these programs.

To be continued...

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