

Technology

Backing up computer files Doing it yourself vs. Companies that do it as a service

In this article we will be talking about backing up a standalone PC, not a computer that is networked. Networked computers usually are set up to do an automatic backup daily. You would contact your system administrator to retrieve the information needed. There are many reasons why we need to be backing up our business files. One important reason, in addition to many more, is in case of a computer crash from a virus, a fire or a theft. It can be a hassle to do a regular backup if you are not using the right tool for your business. There are several ways to get it done. We will start with smaller backups and then move on to bigger ones.



What do I need to backup?

When you turn on your new computer it may request that you create a boot up disk. It is recommended that you file the instructions. It makes it easier if you need to reformat your hard drive. In addition to this, you will want to regularly backup word processing documents, email files, address books, databases of clients or any other databases, accounting files, internet favorites and other files you have created or work with.

How can I backup my information?

USB Key

You can use a USB Key, also known as a memory stick, to backup your computer files. It fits in your USB drive. Newer computers have USB drives in the front of your computer's tower. Newer laptops have several USB slots on the side.

Benefits

- Quick
- Inexpensive
- Can do it yourself
- Portable, can bring anywhere with you
- Easy to transfer files over and over again

Disadvantages

- Largest key right now is 4GB
- Too small to backup large files like photos, mp3s, etc.
- Small; easy to lose, be destroyed in a fire or stolen in a theft

CD

If you have a CD-R or CD-RW drive in your computer, you can use the CD burning program on your computer or right click on the files you want to burn to a CD and send them to your CD burning drive.

Benefits

- CD-RW can be used multiple times
- Can do it yourself

Disadvantages

- Must have a CD burner on your computer
- Small; easy to lose, be destroyed in a fire or stolen in a theft
- Varying formats mean you need to know if you can use CD-R +R or + RW discs in your drive

DVD

You will want to use a DVD to backup if you are backing up on a regular basis, especially if your backup data is too large for a single CD. You can burn DVDs on your computer system if you have a DVD device installed on your system

Benefits

- Same as a CD but can hold a lot more data

Disadvantages

- Small; easy to lose, be destroyed in a fire or stolen in a theft
- Varying formats mean you must know if you can burn DVD-RW or DVD+RW
- Cannot burn DVDs over and over again. Can only burn until the DVD is full.

External Hard Drive

You can attach an external hard drive to your computer to backup your files. This can be scripted to automatically backup on a regular basis.

The constant influx of ever-changing technology is hard to keep up with, and it can be overwhelming to keep modernized. Offering solutions that help you get farther - faster, **JN Software Consulting** can assist whether you are heading back into the workforce and need up-to-date training, or are a small business that needs a website or a bookkeeper. Joy Neuhold is a computer training expert, not to mention a certified Microsoft Trainer, with 5 + years experience. Her career has involved many technology-oriented stints with insurance firms, medical companies and computer magazines but nothing compares to the freedom of doing what she loves, computer consulting. "My favorite thing about training is to watch someone's face when they find an answer to a problem they have been struggling with for so long!"

See more of Joy's articles from her [Ask the Expert](#) column.

Benefits

- Can backup automatically

Disadvantages

- Still prone to fire and theft
- Can be complicated to set up

Online service

You can backup your whole computer or just the files you want with an online company. It will backup to their servers. It can be set to do this automatically. After the initial backup your computer is scanned for subsequent backups. It will then only backup the files it has sensed have changed. After the initial backup it shouldn't take very long to backup your computer.

Benefits

- Can be set up to work automatically
- Pay per size, upgrade price as you go along
- Can do ALL files on computer or just the files you want
- Can be cheaper if you sign up for a service agreement
- Can backup everyday if you want
- After first backup, the subsequent backups only take a few minutes
- Can access the backup from another computer
- Secure
- Technical support

Disadvantages

- Indefinite monthly payments
- First backup takes a few hours
- Must pay per computer, if you want to back up multiple computers
- Tends to only keep your files for so long

To save time, cost and hassle it is strongly recommended to backup regularly. It is up to you how often. If you do a lot of work on your computer, backup once a day. If you do a moderate or little bit of work on your computer, back up weekly. Do NOT wait until you lose your data and go through the hassle of trying to recover it and maybe losing it forever before you start backing up.

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