

Protecting Your Data - Backing Up your Data and System

by Ross Hendry

Say “back-up” to most people and they cringe, fearing complicated computer procedures that they had to do at their businesses. However, for most of us, a back-up simply means copying our important information such as letters and official correspondence and cherished photos, music and videos to another medium, such as a USB memory stick or two, or an external hard disk drive. If you are really adventurous, you might choose to back up by uploading (another name for copying, but “up” to the internet or cloud).

Choosing a medium to copy your data to is a personal choice and depends very much on the volume of information you have, your budget and how you will need access - here are some ideas:

Online or Cloud Back-up - medium capacity storage

Free of charge, it is possible to copy (or upload) your information to the Microsoft's One Drive system, the 15GigaByte (GB) storage available here should be sufficient for most home users. If you need more space think about keeping your photographs online using Google+ Photos or Picasa. To do this you will need a free Google account and by signing up for this you get another email address and 15GB of storage on the internet known as Google Drive. You may use this to store or back-up your data. The one drawback with this option is you really need high speed internet access to get the best from it, I would not consider it if my speed was less than 2Mbits/sec.



USB Hard Disk Drive - for high volume local storage



Looking at local solutions, you may purchase a USB hard disk drive from around £35 (50€ in France) for a 500GB one (this is probably the size of the average hard disk drive on a modern up-to-date PC) and should enable you to store all of your information more than once. These drives are much more affordable now with 2TB drives

available at less than £100.00, but if you are going to rely on this device to keep your data safe, buy the very best quality that you can afford. I prefer Toshiba or Samsung hard drives for reliability.

USB Memory sticks/dongles/thumb drives - low volume local storage

If your volume of data is lower, then you may consider purchasing USB memory sticks, and have one for photos, one for documents, email contacts/address books and emails, and one for music and/

or videos. Please purchase a good quality USB stick for this purpose - 4GB should be good for documents and contacts, but you may need 8GB or more if you have a large collection of photos and music. The better quality ones such as Sandisk's Cruzer 16GB cost £10 from Amazon and 64GB version around £18. The faster ones, known as Extreme or Ultra, are a little more expensive but transfer the data far more quickly.



Back Up Frequency

In any event you should copy your information from your computer to one of these solutions at least once a month, more frequently if you are using your PC daily to record or create new files. Daily if you are using your PC for your business.

Local Security

If you choose a local solution, for total peace of mind this should be stored in a safe place and be fire safe. A secure box at a friend or family member's home could be another option - you might even consider an exchange with a neighbour. A simple cash box would work well as a storage facility.

Operating System and Programs

How do you get your important programs such as Windows or Microsoft Office back if you have a disk failure? Normally you would have a CD or DVD that was supplied with your computer - alternatively, it may be possible to 'write' a CD or DVD if you experience a serious problem. The person charged to assist with the breakdown will be able to help you with this issue when repairing your computer.

Finally **email**, if you use a service like Hotmail/Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo/Ymail or Orange online then you do not need to back-up emails. However if you use Outlook, Outlook Express, Incredimail or Mozilla Thunderbird, then you should also back-up your email, as the chances are that the email service provider is not backing up your emails for you.

If you would like further advice on back-ups please contact me and I will do my best to advise you on the optimum solution for your particular situation. My email address is rs.hendry@gmail.com and my other contact information is on my advert below.

Ross Hendry is the proprietor of Interface Consulting and Engineering, who has over 42 years experience in Communications, Computer Technology and Direct Marketing. (See advert below).

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Please call **Ross Hendry** for assistance

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