

## Glossary of Terms

**Back up** - copies of the original files that you have on your laptop, desktop, or external drive

**External disk drive** – a portable storage device that can be attached to your computer wirelessly or through a USB or FireWire connection and uses a CD or DVD to store information. Limited storage with the size of the CD



**External hard drive** - a portable storage device that can be attached to a computer wirelessly or through a USB or FireWire connection. An internal memory allows large storage



**Files** – documents, photos etc. that you have stored on your computer

**Hard drive** – short for hard disk drive it is the device that permanently stores and retrieves data internally on your computer

**USB** - Universal Serial Bus is a common interface that enables communication between devices and a host controller such as a personal computer (PC). It connects peripheral devices such as digital cameras, mice, keyboards, printers, scanners, media devices, external hard drives and flash drives.

**USB stick** – also known as a USB flash drive, USB thumb drive or pen drive -- is a plug-and-play portable storage device that uses flash memory and is lightweight. A USB flash drive can be used in place of a compact disc (CD).



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# How to back up your computer



Your personal data, files, photos and music are important to you so why risk losing them by having them stored in one place only on your computer or laptop.

## Personal files and information are important to you

Everyone loses data at some point in their lives. Your computer's hard drive could fail tomorrow, ransomware could hold your files hostage, or a software bug could delete your important files. If you're not regularly backing up your computer, you could lose those files forever.

Backups don't have to be hard or confusing, though. You've probably heard about countless different backup methods, but which one is right for you? And what files do you *really* need to back up?

## What is a Computer Backup?

In the case of computer files, we are referring to copies of the original files that you have on your laptop, desktop, or external drive. Creating a backup of original content means having that data saved in two or more places, but it's also important to make sure that those places aren't on the same type of device. For example, if you have 3 copies of a working document on your computer, if your computer crashes, you will still lose all three. This makes the backup method and medium, an important thing to consider for your backup strategy!

## It's All About Your Personal Data

First and foremost, you need to back up your personal files. You can always reinstall your operating system and re-download your programs if your hard drive fails, but your own personal data is irreplaceable.

Any personal documents, photos, home videos, and any other data on your computer should be backed up regularly.

## Ways to Back Up Your Files

There are many ways to back up your data, from using an external drive to backing up those files on a remote server over the Internet or on 'the cloud' ( a type of internet based computing). Here are the strengths and weaknesses of each:

- **Back Up to an External Drive:** If you have an external USB hard drive, you can just back up to that drive using your computer's built-in backup features. On Windows 10 and 8, use file history. On Windows 7, use Windows backup. On Macs, use Time Machine. Occasionally connect the drive to the computer and use the backup tool, or leave it plugged in whenever your home and set it to back up automatically. You can also use a simple USB stick, sometimes called a thumb drive or flash drive. They tend to have less storage but if you haven't many files could be ideal. You can also use an external disk drive, which uses a CD or DVD as its memory.

- **Back Up Over the Internet:** If you want to ensure your files stay safe, you can back them up to the internet with a paid for service. These programs run in the background on your PC or Mac, automatically backing up your files to the service's web storage. If you ever lose those files and need them again, you can restore them.
- **Backup using a Cloud Storage Service:** Backup purists will say this isn't technically a backup method, but for most people, it serves a similar enough purpose. Rather than just storing your files on your computer's hard drive, you can store them on a service like Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft One Drive or a similar cloud storage service. They'll then automatically sync (synchronise) to your online account and to your other PCs. If your hard drive dies, you'll still have the copies of the files stored online and on your other computers. This method is easy, fast, and in many cases, free. However, most cloud services only offer a few gigabytes of space for free, so this only works if you have a small number of files you want to back up, or if you're willing to pay for extra storage.

## One Backup Isn't Enough: Use Multiple Methods

So which should you use? Ideally, you should use at least two of them. Why?

Because you want both *offsite* and *onsite* backups.

"Onsite" literally means backups stored at the same physical location as you. So, if you back up to an external hard drive and store that at home with your home PC, that's an onsite backup.

"Offsite" backups are stored at a different location. So, if you back up to an online server, like BackBlaze or Dropbox, that's an offsite backup.

Onsite backups are faster and easier, and should be your first line of defense against data loss. Offsite backups don't have to be a server on the Internet and you don't have to pay a monthly subscription for one. You could back up your files to a hard drive and store it with family, at a friend's house, or in a bank vault, for example. It'd be a bit more inconvenient, but that's technically an offsite backup. Just make sure you have a solid backup strategy, with onsite *and* offsite backups, so you have a wide safety net against ever losing your files.