

Backup – Frequently and Securely

Backup your computer files to save problems later

A few don't like or trust computers, but most of us have them. They are quick and convenient, especially for storing important documents, even photographs. Provided the file management is up to scratch, whatever is needed can be easily accessed in a matter of seconds. Businesses usually insist that records are backed up on a regular basis; and this is to storage devices separate from the main computer. Then, should the system crash, the data required to carry on without too much of a hassle is on hand. It certainly hasn't been lost forever.

Private users, however, can be lax in this regard. Some backup once in a while; others rarely; and quite often, this is not done in a secure or reliable manner. There are programs that can produce backups either automatically, or on request; and this may seem adequate; but the copied files are still on the same computer. If it goes down or is hacked, the lot will probably have gone; and that can mean months, even years of work that can never be recovered.

Forget about USB sticks and flash drives: these are merely handy devices for transferring data, and are only good in the short term. As proof, I copied some last-minute data onto a USB stick which we took with us on a trip Interstate. On arrival, when I came to load it onto the laptop, I was unable to access it. Somehow, the stick had been corrupted. Maybe it was to do with the X-ray scanner at the airport; I don't know; but we did make sure the same problem never occurred again.

Saving to CDs and DVDs is one way, and a considerable amount of data can be copied to this format. Provided the discs have been formatted appropriately, they can be used just as any folder on the computer. Backing up to them is simply a case of loading the disc into the CD Rom, then copying across. Should this method be used, it is always advisable to reinsert the disc to check that the transfer is complete and readable. As a precaution, testing it on a different computer is also advisable. There are a couple of drawbacks to consider, though. Storing the actual discs can be a problem when there are many; and there is always the risk of physical damage.

Better storage devices are external hard drives. These plug into a USB port and are merely an extension of the computer. The modern ones are light, small – about the size of a fat smart phone – and they hold an amazing amount of data; perhaps more even than the main computer. Transferring to one of these ensures all data is safe, accessible, and can be transported anywhere for downloading to another unit. They cater for files of most kinds, from word-processing and accounts, to music, movies, photographs and video games. Imagine how you would feel to switch your computer on one day and discover you

had lost all of this information. Imagine the relief to know that you were smart enough to have copies that you can reload on another machine.

The beauty of the external hard drive for copying all of your files should be obvious. As an extra precaution, keeping it entirely separate from the computer room is a wise move. After backing up, we return ours to the grab 'n' go bag. This is basically a small laptop carrier with sufficient space for legal and other documents such as insurance policies and typed address lists. Why would we do this? In case of emergency, that's why. Not all that long ago we were forced to evacuate when a bushfire was threatening the town. It took just a few seconds to grab the bag and go. Everything we might have needed was in there, including all the website data, and more. Had the house been destroyed, we would have been able to continue operating from a different location; even from the car. And, although our physical property might have been lost, we still had copies of treasured family photos that could never be replaced.

So, backing up to a secure device really is essential. Keeping it in a grab 'n' go bag is extra insurance. For further information and a few more suggestions in this regard, click on "Your Emergency Check List" which you will find at the foot of A Season of Happiness Home page. Please do; for you own sake and for that of your family.

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