

A Beginners Guide To Backup

This guide will go through techniques which can be used to make a backup on data. There are many cost effective ways available to make a back up.

Key points that will be covered:

- 1) What is backup and why back up data?
- 2) What hardware can be used to back up data?
- 3) What software can be used to back up data?
- 4) How to backup data?
- 5) Lifespan of media and how to keep them in good condition

What is backup and why back up data? (1)

Simply backup means that you have a copy of data stored somewhere else meaning 2 copies. If one copy fails then the second copy could be used which is unlikely to fail at the same time as the first copy unless of course a natural disaster happens.

Data backup is easily a important aspect of computer security. Another thing to note is natural disasters. This may be unlikely but it does happen. When you backup data try and keep it at 2 places rather than one but at the same time keep it secure from any unauthorised people.

There are a lot of ways in which you could back up your data and it is not a really difficult process as people may think.

Also depending on the amount of data you have it is wise to take into account future data and make a decision on what size you need for a back up copy of existing data.

What hardware can be used to back up data? (2)

Common media that can be used to back up data:

External Hard Drive
USB Memory Stick
CD/DVD Disk

These media usually have a long lifespan but it is important that you make a newer copy of a backup material if it is really important and personal family memories.

It is recommend for a home user to purchase a USB Memory stick if it is not too much data that needs backing up or a portable hard drive if it is a lot of data that needs backing up regularly. These can be purchased quite cheaply nowadays and is a worthy investment. It is important that you back up your data in a timely basis.

You may be able to purchase CD/DVD disks from many retail stores such as Argos.

How to determine what you need?

Ask yourself these questions:

How much data in size do I need backed up?

Am I going to add a lot more data in the future?

It is recommend that if you are going to always need to back up data that gets updated regularly then not to go for a CD/DVD disk.

If it is a one of backup such as family photos that is at least or under 4.7 GB then you may use a standard DVD disk. If it is a few documents such as words 2007 file that isn't large in size then it is recommended to use a standard 700 MB CD disk as it will also be cost effective.

If you are going to do a lot of regular back up then it is recommended that you use a media that makes it easy to rewrite over such as a portable hard drive or USB memory stick.

There are many places where you could go to purchase a USB memory stick or portable hard drive. It is usually more for a higher capacity but you usually get a better deal. Also later on we will see why it is important to buy a quality media rather than cheap media for a more reliable back up solution.

Below are some sites that you can go to buy a USB Memory stick or portable hard drive online.

<http://www.ebay.co.uk/>

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/>

What software can be used to back up data? (3)

Today there are many software that are available to back up data. Using software to back up your data has a lot of advantages rather than copy and pasting them manually onto a removable media. Here are major advantages of this:

Automated Backups – This means that you don't really have to do anything rather than set the time and date you want the backups to take place and what drives or files you want backed up.

Online Storage – A copy of your data has been saved online and away from the computer and other hassles such as back up media. In the case of a natural disaster you are safe.

Data Recovery Made Easy – In the case of data loss you do not have to go through lots of data on the media you can access them online. Files online are also encrypted for your privacy.

There are a lot of versions and advance features of software available for backup purposes. You must also note that if this is for just home use there is no point in paying that much money for any small or medium business size packages.

Many anti virus software are now adding online back up features such as Bull Guard so that may be a option to look at if you are planning to buy a anti virus software.

Backup software also not only could back up data but it could back up your system and applications too depending on what software you use.

Here are 2 good software that are available:

Bull Guard - It allows scheduled back up of files online or to a removable media. Data Only.

Acronis True Image Home 2011 – It allows you to do scheduled backup of files either online or removable media. It also allows you to back up your whole operating system itself along with all the applications.

There are also free software that are available today. You may even like to use a built in application on your operating system. Microsoft Windows is one that has a back up and restore option available.

How to back up data? (4)

The easiest way to backup data is to copy it file(s) from one location to another (Example:from your desktop to a portable flash drive)

If you want to backup your hard drive I would recommend Comodo backup, it is a free program that works on windows operating systems

Lifespan of media and how to keep them in good condition (5)

The lifespan of media usually depends on the manufacturer and the quality of the product but here is a list of the usual lifespan of media

CD/DVD's usually last around 2-15 years but the lifetime can be expanded by keeping them in their cases and making sure you only touch the edges of the CD/DVD's so that you do not leave any dirt or scratch the disc's.

USB flash drives have the highest life expectancy than any of the other ones some manufacturers claim that their flash drives can last for over a hundred year, but normally I would expect that they last for around 5 years but this depends on the manufacturer (the cheaper it is the more likely it is to fail).

External hard drives have an life expectancy of 1-10 years depending on the brand and quality of the hard drive, here are 2 good hard drive brands

Western Digital (<http://www.wdc.com/en/>)

Seagate (<http://www.seagate.com/www/en-us/>)

The life expectancy can be prolonged by keeping the hard drive in a clean dry place and not moving it while it is turned on.