



BACKING UP YOUR FILES

Some folks use their computer only for reading E-mail and searching the Internet. But if your computer is also your paperless filing system with documents, spreadsheets, and photos, then you need to make sure you can retrieve these files in case your computer fails, is stolen, or lost. In other words, you need a strategy for maintaining an up-to-date copy of your digital files that's **physically separate** from your computer.

There are two ways to do this. **First, you can set up a backup routine using Window's Backup feature or Apple's Time Machine**, both of which automatically copy your files to an **external hard drive**. Large-capacity drives that hold 1000 gigabytes or more are available for under \$100. The bigger the drive the better, because the backup software will keep more versions of your documents that you've recently revised. (If you have a laptop, you need to remember to connect it to the external drive whenever you're home.)

The second option is to use a "cloud" (Internet) service. Microsoft's OneDrive and Apple's iCloud storage are already well-integrated into Windows and OS X, respectively, and are simple to activate. These maintain a duplicate of your files on the Microsoft or Apple servers, and both provide free storage up to a limit. (Note: Pictures use a lot of file space!) There's nothing to connect because the files are backed up through your Internet connection.

You can also subscribe to a third-party cloud backup service, such as Dropbox (which integrates nicely with both Windows and Mac systems), or Mozy or Carbonite, the latter two of which run as separate backup programs.

Ideally, you should use both an external hard drive at home and a cloud storage service because cloud services provide you with **off-site** storage which ensures your files will be safe even if your home is destroyed. Furthermore, files you store on a cloud server are available on all your devices (tablets and smart phones) and can be accessed via the Web on any computer in the world (after you sign in with your ID and password.) I use a MacBook with Apple's Time Machine that backs up my files to an external hard drive at home, and Microsoft's One Drive that allows me to have all my files available wherever I'm working.

Whatever methods you choose, you won't regret spending a few dollars to back up your years of files and knowing you can recover them at the drop of a hat.