[Tech] Backup Recommendations

For a Millennial (albeit elder), I am a curmudgeon dinosaur and prefer to do my backups on wired physical media that I can hold in my hand and verify. I do my files weekly on an encrypted thumb drive and had been until recently doing daily full drive backups on a Western Digital MyBook encrypted drive. The WD product has stopped making backups and after much effort and troubleshooting, appears to have just stopped working as soon as the warranty expired.

Rather than waste more time on that, I am going to buy a new physical backup medium. Until now, I'd had good luck with WD but am now definitely willing to entertain other options, including options that include both a wired onsite backup and a cloud backup. Any recommendations?

I own a half-dozen external hard drives. They have come down in price and size. I do a weekly backup and keep them off premises. This is works fine for me. In addition, certain programs are backed up nightly by one of my staff members, typically to another computer on the network. For me the main thing to do is to make sure you're doing a ghost copy of your drive. I've had to reinstall two or three times from the ghost copy after a drive has failed. It's a hassle but it works. Some would suggest you also have a copy in the cloud, but I've never felt comfortable doing that

Jim Winiarski

My pitch would be to get several items, whether traditional hard drive, SSD, or others and rotate them. If you have at least 3, and rotate, you are better off for life's travails. Keep at least one offsite (carry it home with you, for example).

Unless you are only backing up a small amount of data, restoring it online takes a long time. Some services will burn and overnight a hard drive to you, but I still look at online backup as a tertiary approach.

Any drive can fail, regardless of manufacturer. All of the drives will fail, at some point. If you buy three alike, then one has a problem, buy three more. The cost of the drives is negligible compared to the costs of the data generally.

If you want to be a nerd, there are studies on particular hard drives and the longevity of same. SSD drives appear to last a long time, if a good brand. Flash drives can be a bit hit or miss, so I have never relied on them myself.

If you use an online backup, or any other approach, you need to practice recovery. Automated backups can be problematic, because many people don't check them regularly and are unaware of problems until a failure occurs.

All of the foregoing is just my view. Feel free to express your own.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

Following up from Darrell's points, I don't trust third party servers - there's just too much exposure to hacks and I don't want to fuss with the latest patches and firewalls. I have two external hard drives (G Drive) that back up my entire computer system (all software, apps, operating system, as well as docs, music, photos) and I rotate them in and out of my safe deposit box regularly, at the least once a month.

When the hard drive of my main computer died suddenly, I had no idea if the backup drive would work because I had neglected to test it. Happily, in a few hours after buying a new computer, I had everything from my former computer installed and up and running. Did not lose a single bit.

Every time I travel, I load my entire legal file onto my laptop. I am vigilant about theft but of course that's a weak link. Other times I load just the files I need on the laptop or on a thumb drive that I keep as secure as possible.

Flann Lippincott,New Jersey

Just to piggy back on this thread:

What do you all recommend for Backup, and Ghost or Mirror Drive software?

I've got several portable hard drives, but I'm not sure how to actually set up the backup system.

Michael D. Caccavo, Vermont

I have a Macintosh.

I have Time Machine backing up my entire hard drive to a local backup hard drive, and I have Backblaze (for a cloud backup).

Henry Park, New York

I use Acronis for my ghost copies. You have the option of making a ghost copy. As for the hard drives, I was using Western Digital passports that are very small in size. Recently I've switched to a Toshiba simply on a recommendation from someone else. There was some formatting necessary with the Western Digital passports but the Toshibas are plug-and-play. Simply tell the software to copy onto the hard drive. So, in the event of a hard drive failure, you're really copying the operating system, programs, and all data back into the new hard drive. Newer versions of the software claim it could even be put on a new computer, but I haven't tried that.

Jim Winiarski