# Popular Threads on Solosez

## AGGGHHHH!!! When Your Hard Drive Goes Bad

Have any of you faced this problem? If so, how did you handle it?

T.J. Thurston, Illinois

---

Scotch. Single malt. Lots.

I had stuff backed up to a Jaz drive (by the makes of Zip drives and only worse in the sense that they are even LESS compatible with any other computerized device on the planet). I tried beer, but only scotch could really help.

Now for less immediate but more practical advice: Whatever drive you bought to replace your busted one, buy a second, identical one right now. Install both, and use one for backup.

If you're really feeling technologically exotic, also purchase a RAID controller card, and pay someone to install it for you.

You can set it up so that the second hard drive (provided everything about it is absolutely identical to the first drive) is a mirror image of your main hard drive. This means that if one hard drive fails, the other works seamlessly, and you get a warning about the failure, but keep working like nothing happened.

Of course, you won't be able to retrieve a file you properly delete by accident, so regular external backups are still called for, but this is a great solution for drive failure.

If you don't want to cope with RAID (and I decided against it because I was having problems making the initial disk image -- turned out to be a bad disk, not a bad RAID setup, damn it), you still have a second internal drive to use as a regular backup. If you have a failure, worst case scenario is you pop that disk out of your machine, chuck it into an external hard drive enclosure ($30 to $50), and go to any PC with a USB port and continue your work. Including working on your laptop.

If the backup files are compressed, you'll have to also put your backup software on the new PC (or existing laptop, etc.) to access the backup contents. Otherwise, you just work away.

I love internal drives. And scotch.

Marie Clear, Bartlett, Illinois

---

This has not happened to me.....yet.

However, in such a situation I would never wait for a part to come by mail unless it was something that cannot be found in a store nearby (w/in 30 miles). I personally would rather pay a premium for what I need and for timeliness than saving a few dollars to get one from a discount e-tailer. When I was building my current computer, the HD I ordered was bad. I paid to have it tested and then for shipping; I lost valuable time and the price was much higher than expected due to extra shipping.

If I'm understanding you correctly, you have a built in Zip drive. If that's the case, and you feel comfortable doing it, (and you still have to wait on the mailed HD) I would see if someone else would allow you to install the Zip drive in their computer so you can access your files. It's not too much work to pull out that unit and install it in another desktop.

Third alternative would be to buy an external Zip drive. You can use it now and also have the assurance that you can transfer large files between your desktop and laptop. But here, too, you would need to buy it locally to save time.

Your situation brings up something important about backups. IMO, it's better to backup to a medium that will allow you to restore to another computer. Years ago I used an internal Zip drive for backups. But I had 2 computers and made sure each had a Zip drive.

I stopped using Zips b/c of problems with the drives and discs becoming flaky and the ridiculous cost of the discs. I then went to a Fujitsu magnetic optical drive (still my favorite but now too limited in storage capacity/disc) and am now using a Western Digital Passport drive; 80GB for under $100 and runs on the USB power, very handy.

Good luck.

Clarence Behrend. West Bend, Wisconsin

---

If the computer is a Dell, he has to wait for the part by mail. I had a hardrive crash on a Dell laptop in law school. I had to order a new hard drive from Dell because every stinkin thing on the computer is proprietary. The only good thing is that I ordered the replacement hard drive at 9pm Monday night and had it by noon on Wednesday (paying the slow shipping speed).

Amy Ondos

---

This might be a little extreme, but I have a Mirra hard drive AND a backup notebook computer - a computer that I keep in my closet that has a mirror image of my main notebook computer drive. Seems like it might be a bit wasteful, but after having had more than a few hard drives crash on me, I'm determined not to have any more down time again due to another hard drive crash. I figure I can work on my backup computer until I find the time to restore my backup image to my main computer. Then I can put the backup computer back in the closet until my next crash/failure.

In the past, when I had hard drive failures, it took me something like 12+ hours to get back in business. That nearly killed me each time.

As far as the Mirra drives go, they've saved my bacon more times than I can remember. They are lifesavers and are worth every penny. They even keep up to 8 older versions of every backed up file, which has come in very handy on a few occasions. Another thing, they allow you to access all your backed up files over the internet (you access your Mirra server directly over the internet). That's also proved very handy on a few occasions.

Gene Lee, Los Angeles, California

---

RESENDING (apologies if this duplicates): This morning my hard drive crashed on my desktop. I have a laptop, but all of my forms, Outlook files, etc. are on that computer. I do have it backed up, but to a Zip drive, which I don't have for my laptop. I have to wait for the new hard drive to come in the mail. So, while I can do some work, things are really going to slow me down this week. Have any of you faced this problem? If so, how did you handle it?

WAITING IN THE HEARTLAND

---

Here while back, yes, my old laptop died without notice. Now I immediately double-save docs not only as I'm working on them but especially when I'm finished to both the internal c: and the external g:, which will plug into the new laptop if I need it to.

But thanks for the reminder to back up app data to both drives. Sometimes I'm sloppy about that.

Carolyn J. Stevens, Lolo, Montana

---

Redundancy is the key, along with pre-planning. Another computer and a backup plan will have you in operation quicker. My longest downtime to date was about six hours when I completely lost a server, and was mostly hardware replacement as contributing to the timeline.

Regardless of planning, I always keep my fingers crossed. However, I do keep a completely set up computer in the back to plug in as a replacement workstation as a part of the plan. Having multiple computers is a good thing, which combined with a workable backup plan allows for faster recovery.

Darrell G. Stewart, San Antonio, Texas

---

I had the very same thing happen last Wednesday. Took me until Friday at 5:00 to get it back up and running. I'm sure mine isn't the ideal set-up, but it worked in the end and saved my cookies (and all my data). For the last several years, I have been using two external hard drives, alternating them between backups, using BackUpMyPC. The program has worked great

over the years to restore individual files or folders when necessary, but I had never had to use it for a full blown crash. I installed a new hard drive and tried to format, but was unsuccessful. I called my tech guy, who was finally able to come on Friday. Even he was having difficulty. It took three tries, but he was finally able to get it to do a successful restore on the third try. I asked him afterward about anything I should be doing differently, and he said there really wasn't. He said that they have had successes and failures on other brands of software and on much more sophisticated and expensive setups than mine. For us, the key was doing regular backups to minimize the data loss. Even though there were problems getting it to restore, we knew the data was there. It was just a matter of getting it restored. Worst case scenario we would had to have reinstalled the programs and transferred the data from the backups. However, with our set-up, once it restored correctly, it was restored exactly as it was before the crash, including the desktop icons, customized buttons within programs, etc. I highly recommend this over simply backing up your data. Now, I must confess something. We had only been doing backups every 2-3 days. We then noticed the hard drive making some noise and the system getting quirky. Thus, we started backing up every day, which gave us zero data loss when it did crash. If there was any bright spot in this ordeal, the tech guy discovered that although our machine has USB 2.0, the drivers for it weren't loaded, thus the external hard drives took a long time to backup for our relatively small disk size. This is probably one of the reasons (albeit a poor one) we didn't back up every day was because of how long it took. Hopefully we will now be better about backing up every day. Thus, the lesson we learned, to paraphrase election strategy - backup and backup often.

Jeffrey S. Royer, Blue Springs, Missouri

---

Would the local Kinkos have zip drives you can use to extract the data and then burn to a cd? Aside from that you could see about getting an external enclosure for the zip drive with an ide to usb interface that you could hook up to the laptop.

Lesley A. Hoenig, Morris, Illinois

---

Go to your local computer store and get a USB zip drive for your laptop. Problem solved (temporarily, at least).

Scott I. Barer

---

You got a zip drive? Wow, can you still find discs for it? Depending on the crash, you might try of of a number of disc repair utilities and see if that gets you running again. Now, typically, if you need to use something like that once, you'll need to run it again, so the new drive is still a good idea. But, if you could resurrect your current drive, it would be much easier to transfer the data over, assuming you have a spare bay...but I guess you could probably replace the zip drive with the new hard drive until it was cloned, then either put it back in or replace it with something else.

Steve O'Donnell

---

Thank you Darrell and to all who responded to this on and off list. You guys are awesome!

---

You make me want to get a good backup portable hard drive for my desktop.

Michael A. Blake, Milford, Connecticut

---

Better yet, get a Mirra personal server. Pricier than an external hard drive, but worth every penny.

Scott I. Barer

---

OK, here is my message to all. Portable or external hard drive backups are an excellent idea. BUT, make sure you set up a RAID system, because regardless of how much or how often you backup, you might still lose data you didn't think of OR your applications (and updates). I haven't completely determined how bad this crash is yet, but I truly am hoping that I don't have to recover everything from backup disks. If I do, a RAID system would have come in handy, because if one drive fails it can automatically switch to another drive and you don't lose anything.

T.J. Thurston, Illinois

[Back to Popular Threads](#)