

# Done a Computer Backup Lately?

Think of a computer backup like a safety belt in your car. In the event of a crash, a backup saves the valuable information on your computer from being lost forever. If you haven't done a backup lately, the following information will help you get started on this important task.

There are three main ideas to consider when backing up your computer:

## 1. How often should you back up your files?

In my opinion, computer backups should be done as frequently as your most important data changes. If you are working on a large important project every day, then you should be backing those files up every day.

It depends on how valuable your electronic files are to you, and how stressed you would be if you lost them.

## 2. What files should you back up?

Personally, I include the following in my backup procedure:

- Electronic photographs I want to keep
- Software or other files that I bought on the internet and downloaded
- Music files that I bought on the internet and downloaded
- Personal files stored in the My Documents folder
- My e-mail address contacts
- My calendar information
- My favorite bookmarks
- The files from my TurboTax, Quicken and other banking/business software.

## 3. What methods should you use to backup you computer data?

Here are three of the most common ways. *Option "c" is my favorite if you want to cut to the chase.*

- a. Buy an large external drive and back up your entire computer. This is a great idea that takes a lot of time. I do not back up my entire computer. I figure that if my PC crashes, I can reinstall the software from my original CDs, and there's no need for me to store those files twice.

*NOTE: I do back up software I downloaded from the internet. I've been burned several times by not saving software I've purchased. Many companies will only support older versions of software for so long. You may find that great craft program you downloaded a year ago is no longer available and you have to either upgrade or buy a new copy.*

*So, when you buy software from the internet, save and backup the compressed file that you download and include it in your computer backup procedure.*

- b. Buy CD burning software and read-writable CDS and burn your files to CD. I don't recommend this method. The technology is old and unreliable in my opinion. I used to do this and found the process so cumbersome. Sometimes, the burner wouldn't work, or the CD was bad or some other silly issue would crop up, so I gave it up.
- c. **Buy a large capacity flash drive and back up just your data files.** This is my preferred method. I buy 4Gb flash (also known as thumb) drives and back up all my valuable data every day.

This method is by far the best way to get a reliable computer backup. I say this because:

1. It's **EASY**, which means you and I will actually do it and..
2. It's **PORTABLE**, which means you can take the saved data **out of the house** when you leave.

There's not much point in doing a computer backup if the backup unit is sitting right next to your computer when your house floods or burns down.

**So, here are the steps to perform a computer backup with a flash drive:**

1. **First, of course, buy a large capacity flash drive if you don't have one.** They are available at any office supply or computer supply store, or you can buy one from Amazon or any other reputable online store. (Just type in *flash drive* in the search field). A 4Gb flash drive shouldn't cost more than \$25 USD. Here's a typical listing at Amazon:



**Kingston DTI 4 GB USB Flash Drive**  
Other products by [Kingston](#)  
★★★★★ (217 customer reviews) [More about this product](#)

List Price: ~~\$34.99~~  
Price: **\$21.26** & eligible for **FREE Super Saver Shipping** on orders over \$25. [Details](#)  
You Save: **\$13.73 (39%)**

**In Stock.**  
Ships from and sold by **Amazon.com**. Gift-wrap available.

Want it delivered **Monday, March 31**? Order it in the next 15 hours and 33 minutes, and choose **One-Day Shipping** at checkout. [See details](#)

2. **Once you have the flash drive, turn on your computer and wait for it finish booting up.** Then uncap and plug the flash drive into one of your USB ports. These are the ports which have a 3 pronged arrow symbol next to them. Here's a picture of the symbol and the ports on my computer:



3. **You may see a hardware symbol pop up in the system tray of Windows**, (that's the tray in the bottom right hand corner that holds the time) or this dialog box: Click Cancel if it comes up.



4. **Open Windows Explorer by right clicking on your Windows Start button, and left clicking on Explore.** The flash drive will show up as another drive letter, most likely E: or F: drive.
5. **On the right side of the Explorer window,** find the folder on files that you want to back up.
6. **Right click on the file or folder and drag it and drop it onto the flash drive letter.** Choose “Copy Here” from the menu that appears. The file or folder will begin copying onto the flash drive.
7. **When you are done, Close Windows Explorer.** You can unplug your flash drive now.

**Reminder:** Once your backup is done, don't leave your flash drive plugged into your computer. Backed up files should be moved to a separate location in case you have a fire or other disaster that destroys your computer. Take it with you when you leave the house. Most flash drives come with a design that allows you to attach it to your house or car key chain, so it makes it easy to take along.

This page is located at: <http://www.sensible-computer-help.com/computerbackup.html>