The Importance of Data Backup
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Yeah, we regularly write about data backup. At least monthly, we'll be contacted by someone with an issue that a regular backup could have made much easier to deal with. The Computing Center provides all the backup solutions mentioned in this article and helps clients with backup strategies, best practices, and management of their backup systems.

Have you ever lost a lot of really important data? Or, short of that, have you ever felt a moment of panic where you thought you did?

Whether it's images of a family vacation, a report from work, or a semester's worth of homework, you probably have data on your computer's hard drive or your mobile device that's not just valuable, it's too valuable to lose.

Data loss can happen to anyone. Having a backup strategy can help you to avoid the crushing feeling that comes with finding out that all your hard work and treasured memories are gone.

It's a good idea to make backing up data a part of your cyber hygiene. If you happen to lose your data due to a hardware defect or ransomware attack, having a backup could be the respite you're looking for.

The importance of backing up

Let's face it, you may have a great computer or external hard drive, but one day they're going to wear out and you may lose your data. That's just the nature of any piece of hardware. Your local computer repair person might be able to rescue your data, but then again, maybe not. That's the gamble you take if you don't backup your data.

Worse, the Internet harbors many potential threats to your data. Things like viruses and Trojans don't just steal your data. In some cases, they erase it.

There's also the threat of ransomware. That's when a hacker puts a virus on your computer that encrypts your data, making it useless. You may have to pay a ransom in order for the hacker to unencrypt your data, with no guarantee that he or she will do so. If you have a current backup of your data, this is less of a worry. You can just wipe your hard drive and restore it to your latest backup.

How to backup your data

There are a lot of ways to back up your data. Each way has its own procedure. Still, here are some general guidelines when it comes to making a good backup.

- Storage is cheap, so it makes the most sense to just back up everything. You might save a few pennies by only storing what you absolutely can't replace. But low cost means most computer users will want to back up everything.
- Cloud storage offers some advantages over local storage. For instance, if your house is flooded, your backup might be lost, unless you stored your data in the cloud.
- The more places your data is backed up, the better. You don't have to pick between a locally stored physical backup and backing up in the cloud. Choosing both is your safest bet.
- Don't underestimate the value of having physical copies of things like your bank statements and tax records. It's a good idea to keep a file of your most important documents, in addition to any digital backups you have.
- Identify what you need to back up. For example, some of your computer applications might be stored in the cloud and that may not be necessary.

- Your documents are likely the most important part of your backup. So take time to organize them. That way, you can be confident you've backed up everything you need to.
- Application data is one of the more difficult things to back up because the data can change daily. If you rely a lot on applications, you might need a backup solution that backs up regularly — daily or more often — without you having to take action.
- Backing up isn't an all-or-nothing proposition. It's a good idea to have a thumb drive on hand to back up recent important documents. Again, you want as many layers of backup as you can get.

Data backup options

There are plenty of options to back up your data. It's smart to understand the types of backup and get one that suits your need.

External hard drives

As the name sounds, an external hard drive is connected to the computer on the outside via cables or wirelessly. Examples of external hard drives include USB flash drives and solid state drives, also known as SSDs. External hard drives have some advantages. They're portable, easy to use, and capable of storing large files. Plus, they can be moved from computer to computer, making it convenient to transport data.

Cloud backup

Cloud backup allows users to back up their data to hardware that's in a remote location. Users can access their data anytime on any device via the internet.

Cloud storage makes it easy to manage your data. Most cloud storage services provide a large amount of storage space and encrypt the content for data security.

Flash drives

Flash drives are small portable storage devices mostly used to transfer files from device to device. They're also called pen drives, thumb drives, or jump drives.

Unlike cloud storage, flash drives do not come with a large storage capacity and do not have additional security features should your drive be lost or stolen.

Backup services

Online backup service is a method of data backup and storage in which a service provider handles the stored data. A backup service can help people and companies manage their data better.

Most services offer encryption and protect the data from loss caused by technological malfunction or cybercrime.

What's the best data backup solution?

The best data backup solution is the one that best suits your needs. A lot depends on the kind of data you're protecting. Cybercriminals can use seemingly unimportant data and patch it together to commit identity theft. A strong backup strategy can make a big difference in your digital life and give you peace of mind.

Here are few things to look for in a backup system.
- Ease of set up
- Storage space
- Cost
- How quickly your data can be backed up

- The security of your data
- Ability to restore and recover your data quickly
- Mobile and tablet apps to access your data

Do I need multiple backups?

Laptops crash. Phones break. The "blue screen of death" appears.

There are a lot of reasons to back up your personal data. And it's a good idea to do it in more than one place. If you're looking for easy access to your files when you don't have an internet connection, you can store data in a removable device like an external hard drive. If you're looking for online backup, having a cloud storage strategy can be an effective solution.

The chances of losing all of your data, say, in a disaster aren't great, but it's never a bad idea to take precautions should the unthinkable happen. Think of data backup as one of those better-safe-than-sorry precautions. It's relatively inexpensive and it doesn't take much time. The cost of going without could be a lot greater.