

# Backing Up Your Files FAQs

## What are backups and why should I care about them?

A backup is a copy of your digital information — your files. Files can be accidentally or maliciously deleted, destroyed, or corrupted in a fire, natural disaster, or ransomware attack. You need a copy of your files to restore them.

## What should I consider when planning my backups?

Everyone needs a different backup strategy depending on which devices they use (smartphone, tablet, PC...) and how they use them. Plan your backup strategy with these key points:



**What files do you need to back up?** For most people, these are your music, photos, and documents. Business owners also need to back up the files needed to run their business, like financial, customer, and operational files.



**How frequently do you need to back up your files?** If you create or change files daily (like if you're writing a novel), then you may need to back up your files daily. If you rarely create or change files, then monthly or quarterly backups may be enough.



**What media do you want to save your files to?** For example, you can back up your files to an external hard drive, a USB stick, DVD/CD, or the cloud. Each has benefits and drawbacks. For instance, copies on an external hard drive, USB stick, or DVD are cheaper and more convenient, but a natural disaster or fire may damage them.



**Where do you store your backups?** Some ransomware will search your system for backups and make them unusable. So, store your backups offline. This means unplugging the external hard drive or USB stick after backing up or disconnecting from the cloud. As a rule of thumb, if you have to plug something in or log in to access your backup, then it should be safe from ransomware. If you back up to an external hard drive or USB stick, consider storing it in a locked, fireproof safe or cabinet, or in a bank safety deposit box.



**Rotate:** If you are using an external hard drive or USB stick, have at least two and rotate them. For example, if you are doing weekly backups, use USB stick 1 for week 1, USB stick 2 for week 2, and reuse USB stick 1 for week 3... Many people use five USB sticks – one for each week plus one that goes into a fireproof safe every month.



**Test:** Restore a file every month or quarter, depending on how frequently you back up your files, to test that you can and that the backup process worked.

## How do I back up my information?

Check with your device or application maker for options and instructions to create backups and to restore your files. Some offer free cloud storage for your backups. There are also paid and free backup services, although free services often have restrictions and are not recommended.

Apple, Google, Microsoft, and other companies provide different ways to back up the files on your devices. Here are some links to get you started.

Apple: [How to Backup your Mac](#)

Apple: [iCloud](#)

Google: [Back up or restore data on your Android device](#)

Microsoft: [Back up your Documents, Pictures, and Desktop folders with OneDrive](#)

Microsoft: [Backup and Restore in Windows 10](#)