



TJMicro Tech Tips

How to Back Up Your Data

Most of us relentlessly press the save icon as we work on a file, nervous that we might lose the latest changes we have made to the file we are working on. Previously, we would save important files on USB sticks – some of us might even remember the days of floppy disks – but in this age of technology and considering the amount of files we want to store, these options are no longer viable solutions.

So how should you store all that data? Here we will go over the what, where, and when of backing up your data.

What data should I be backing up?

The short answer: Whatever you want.

Any file or item that is important to you and that might want to review in the future should be backed up. This can include presentations, papers, contact lists, or photos. If you're not sure if you want it again – back it up. Backing up your data will allow you to restore it if it gets accidentally deleted or if your device gets infected by a virus and makes your file unreadable.

Figuring out what data you want to back up, and therefore the amount of data, will dictate where you can back it up.

Where do I back it up to?

Knowing what and how much data you are planning to back up will guide your decision on where to back up the data. For some data, you may want on the spot automatic back ups, like we often see with the photos we take using our cell phone camera, and for other data, such as that big project you completed last year but aren't going to touch again, you only need it to be backed up once. Getting a sense of what data will inform your decision on where to pack things up. Below, we have listed some examples of ways you can back up your data.

USB Key

USB keys are useful for backing up specific items, especially if you're unlikely to use that file frequently, but just want to make sure you have an accessible copy. Typically, the USB key is inserted into the computer and you need to start the back up manually. Although many of us are familiar with USB keys, and they are a low cost option, they are easily misplaced – so any plan to use USB keys should include details on where you are keeping them to make sure they aren't lost.

External Drive

External drives are very similar to USB keys – they just have more space, allowing you to back up much more to the drive than you can to a USB key. These are often popular options, and you can often find sales to get ones with lots of space for relatively low cost. Backing up to an external drive, like a USB key, will require manual initiation, unless you get it consistently plugged into your computer, allowing you to set up automatic and frequent back ups. However, in doing this, it can expose your drive to the same issues that may infect your computer and result in data loss.

Cloud Service

Someone looking to make sure they have copies of all their photos may be interested in a cloud service that automatically backs up every photo that is taken. This option is also good for individuals who have lots of data and require frequent back up. Using a cloud service often gives the user peace of mind, as the cloud service holds accountability for maintaining your data and has safeguards in place to ensure that you have access to it in the future. However, with this peace of mind comes a cost. Cloud services can range from a few bucks a month to significantly higher, and this rate is often dependent on the amount of data you are storing.

When should I be backing up my data?

In trying to answer this question, you should think about the importance of the data. The more important the data to you, the more often it should be backed up, especially if it's something that you're working on and revising. Important files should be backed up at least once a week – with an automated daily back up being the ideal solution. Build a routine or schedule for backing up your data, this way it doesn't slip from your mind and end up at the lower end of your to do list.

If the question ever remains, when in doubt, back up your data. It's easier to choose later to delete it, than to try and recover a lost file.



Kyle Hacker is the CEO of TJMicro Ltd – your complete source for professional IT services. Kyle has diverse experience in managing professional IT services and strives to meet the needs of all his clients. TJMicro Ltd provides tailored services to organizations of all sizes and across the private and public sector. To find out more about what TJMicro can do to help support your business, contact Kyle at kyle@tjmicro.com.

If you have any questions about backing up your data, please contact TJMicro Ltd by phone at 416-317-6000 or email at info@tjmicro.com.

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