

WHY BACK UP?

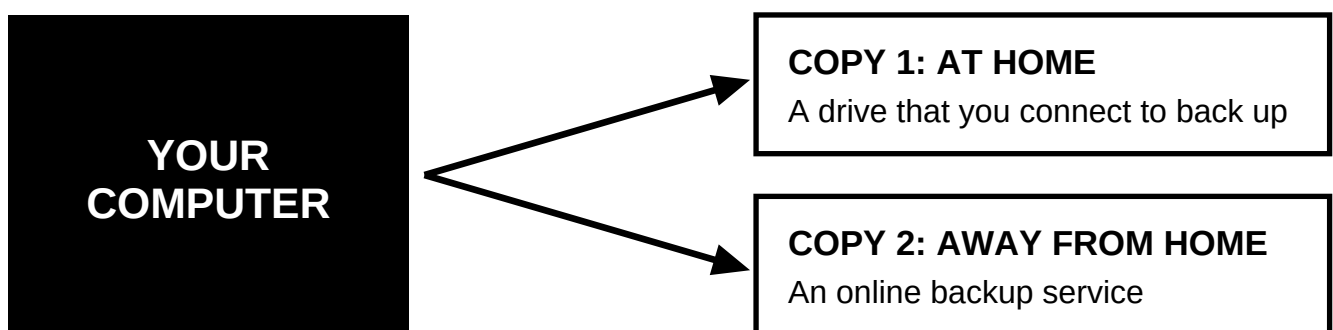
Most of us now keep some of our most precious things on a computer or phone: years of family photos, important letters and documents, and countless emails. Yet computers rarely give us any warning before they fail, and a breakdown, a theft or a ransomware attack (malicious software that locks your files and demands payment for their return) could see all of it lost in an instant. A backup is simply a second copy of those files, kept somewhere else, so that nothing irreplaceable is lost if the worst happens.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BACK UP?

Concentrate on anything you couldn't replace. For most people, that means photos and videos first and foremost, followed by letters, documents and any emails or contacts stored only on the computer itself. Programs and settings can usually be reinstalled, so they matter far less.

WHY TWO PLACES?

Every type of backup has a weakness. A drive kept at home is exposed to the same fire, flood or burglary as your computer and, if it's left plugged in, ransomware can reach it too. An online service keeps your files safely away from home, but it depends on an account that could be locked, hacked or closed. With one copy at home and another online, whatever goes wrong, one of them will survive.



OUR RECOMMENDATION

Back up to two places: one at home and one online. That way, no single mishap can cost you your files.

YOUR OPTIONS

Listed from strongest to weakest.

1 STRONGEST	An online backup and a drive at home Benefits: Between them, these protect against almost anything, from a breakdown or burglary to a fire, a scam or a simple mistake, and the drive lets you restore files quickly. Drawbacks: It costs a little more, and there are two backups to check.
2 GOOD	Online backup: IDrive or Backblaze Benefits: Your files are copied automatically to a secure location away from home, and earlier versions are kept for a while, so mistakes and ransomware damage can be undone. Drawbacks: There's an annual fee, the first backup can take several days, and restoring everything needs a good internet connection.
3 ONE TYPE ONLY	A drive at home only Benefits: A one-off purchase that's quick to restore from and keeps everything in your home. Drawbacks: It relies on you remembering to use it, and a fire, flood or burglary could take it along with the computer. If it's left plugged in, ransomware can reach it too, and drives wear out with age.
4 ONE TYPE ONLY	Cloud sync only, such as OneDrive Benefits: Often included already, it works automatically and keeps your files available on all your devices. Drawbacks: Syncing isn't the same as backing up: a file deleted or damaged on your computer is deleted or damaged online too. Deleted files are usually only kept for around 30 days.
X WEAKEST	No backup: your files exist only on your computer or phone, where a single fault, theft or scam could mean losing them for good.

IDRIVE OR BACKBLAZE?

Both are well-established online backup services that work quietly in the background. Which one suits you depends largely on how many devices you have.

	IDrive	Backblaze
Covers	All your computers, phones and tablets in a single account	One computer, together with any drives plugged into it
Space	A set amount, plenty for most households	Unlimited
Older versions	Up to 30 previous versions of each file	30 days of previous versions, or a year if you choose
Best for	Households with several computers or phones	One computer with a large number of photos and files

Both charge an annual fee, and as prices change from time to time, it's worth checking their websites or asking us for a recommendation. If you use OneDrive, iCloud, Google Drive or similar, our [Guide to Cloud Storage](#) explains how they compare.

KEEPING YOUR BACKUP WORKING

A backup is only useful if it's working, so a few minutes of attention now and then is well worthwhile.

- Once a month, check that the latest backup was made today or yesterday.
- If you use a drive, unplug it once the backup has finished and keep it somewhere safe.
- Every few months, try restoring a file to make sure everything works as it should.
- Keep the login details for your online backup in your password manager or password book.

WE CAN SET IT UP FOR YOU

If you're not sure where to start, we can set up your backup, make sure it's working properly and show you how to restore your files.