

From David Num

Windows 7 has full support for four different kinds of backups:

- **Shadow copies**, also known as *previous versions*. Win7 maintains snapshots of your data files, taken every night around midnight. To see the previous versions of your data files, click Start and then Documents. In Documents, navigate to the file that you'd like to resurrect. Right-click on the filename and choose Restore Previous versions. You see all of the stored shadow copies of that particular document, and it's easy to restore them.
- **Data backups** Setting up data backups is amazingly easy, although there's a little trick. If you're running Windows 7 Professional (or Ultimate) and you have a network, you can put your data backups on a network drive. To do so, click Start, Accessories, Getting Started. Click **Back up your files**, and follow the instructions. If you're running Win7 Home Premium or you don't have a network, your best bet is to buy an external hard drive for backups. (A large 2TB drives cost under a hundred bucks.) Plug the external drive into a USB port, choose the **Use the Drive for Backup** option, and follow the instructions.
- **System restore points** Just like Windows XP and Vista, Win7 has tools to set up, manage, and use system restore points. See Microsoft's [FAQ](#) for details.
- **Ghost or system images** Windows 7 also makes it easy to make a copy of your entire hard drive, a so-called image backup or **ghost**. To do this, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, Getting Started, **Back up your files**. Then in the upper-left corner, click the link to **Create a system image**.

Win7 makes shadow copies and data backups automatically, following the instructions you give when you first run the backup programs. It's easy, fast, and built into Windows.

Windows-Restore Previous Versions

Windows in addition to offering backup tools also has this feature in Vista and Win7. Windows help site has a FAQ (frequently asked questions) explaining what this feature is [HERE](#).

Here is a quote from that site:

“Previous versions are either copies of files and folders created by Windows Backup or copies of files and folders that Windows automatically saves as part of a restore point. You can use previous versions to restore files and folders that you accidentally modified or deleted, or that were damaged. Depending on the type of file or folder, you can open, save to a different location, or restore a previous version.”

Previous versions are created whenever Windows create a restore point. This usually occurs once per day, but depends on your system setup. They do not replace backups but do offer a limited safety net if you need to recover a file that has been otherwise completely deleted from your computer. Limited, because they are temporary and use the space set aside for restore points, as these fill this space the oldest are selectively deleted to make room. They are likely to only be available for days or a few weeks. The other weakness is that they reside on the same disk as the files they are backing up, making them less safe for long term storage.

Exploring previous version files is easy. Open Windows Explorer and right click on a folder that has files that are changed frequently, eg My Documents. You should see a menu item Restore Previous Versions. Click it, wait a moment and explore. On my system I found 14 versions, 1 for Yesterday, 4 for last week, 6 in the last month and 3 in the past year. Note they also display files in Windows backups if they exist. If you don't store your files using folders in your user profile, eg My Documents, photos etc they may not be protected.

Browsing and recovering a file if it exists is easy. If Restore Previous versions it isn't shown on your system see the above help page.

Techie note: The previous-version feature is part of Win7's on-by-default System Protection service, which includes System Restore. Whenever System Restore creates a restore point for your system files, it simultaneously creates previous-version copies of changed data files. (Unfamiliar with System Protection and System Restore? See Microsoft's Help & How-to, "What is system protection?" and its System Restore FAQ.)

Other backup issues.

Syncing

Synctoy (Microsoft) and Karen's Replicator are a couple of free programs for regularly syncing important data.

Various cloud services (Windows Live, Mozy, Dropbox etc) also offer syncing and backup options. Some will keep data synced across any device, smartphone/tablet/laptop/desktop. Work on one and the data is available on any.

Some cloud services provide similar functionality eg Gmail.

Getting Help

Search for help on Google or in Windows Help and Support.

Restoring from the recycle bin

Of you have inadvertently deleted a file or folder, this should be your first port of call.

Open the recycle bin, found on the top left of the desktop normally, select the files/folders you want to restore, choose restore the files from the top line of options.

Creating a system repair disk

A system repair disk can help you get Windows going in the event of a serious system problem.

Search for system repair in Windows Help and Support.

At the next meeting David will talk about using Win7's backup system. (Vista is very similar)

There are three parts to Microsoft's backup tools. The first part protects your system's user data — ie each user's locally stored library files plus the contents of the user folders and subfolders, such as Application Data, Contacts, Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Favourites, Links, Music, Pictures, Saved Games, Searches, and Videos.

Those folders contain the data you most often add and change. Windows 7 backup puts most emphasis on automatically protecting these files.

The user-data backup process specifically excludes program files.

The second part allows you to back up system folders, installed programs, and the like. As these change less regularly they do not require the same frequency of backup.

The third component of the Win7 backup system is a bootable System Recovery Disk. A recovery disk enables you to restore your system to your last backup point even after a disk crash.

Online Backup

There are now a number of backup services in the "cloud". That is you can back up your data to a remote data storage server using the internet.

Advantages include, free storage, secure professionally managed backups, ability to share data with others and access (using the right password) from any other internet connected computer. In most cases multiple versions of files are kept for up to a month allowing you to backtrack to an earlier version of a critical file. Most online-storage services offer automated backups, which run unobtrusively in the background, can be scheduled and have little or no effect on PC performance

Disadvantages are the possibility that the provider may go bust (never rely on one back up source for critical data), slower speed of most upload links and much slower backup speeds than using an external hard drive.

Microsoft, a late player with its recent Windows live offering offers up to 25Gb of free online storage, which is well integrated with its new Office 2010. More established providers such as Dropbox, Mozy and Boxnet offer 1-2GB of storage for free, enable sharing of data with others and auto backup of nominated data folders. You can increase the amount of storage by paying a monthly fee. Mozy will simultaneously backup to an external hard drive.

Retrieving data requires you to log on and select the files to be downloaded; Mozy is clumsier and requires starting a restore session and downloading.

A search using Google e.g. "online backup service reviews" will provide plenty of further information if this topic is of interest.

May 2012 newsletter

March 31 was officially “World Backup Day”!

Our whole lives are found on our hard drives. When a hard drive fails and the data isn't backed up, **it's gone**. And it's not a question of IF your drive will fail, it's WHEN.

Some scary stats for those who don't backup their files:

- All hard drives will crash during their lifetime
- More than 1 in 10 laptops will be stolen in their lifetime
- A laptop is stolen every 53 seconds
- Every year 46% of computer users lose their music, photos, and documents
- 50% of all hard drives will crash within 5 years
- 89.1% of PC users don't perform regular backups

Backup your digital life before you wish you did!

This [site](#) has some handy tips on backing up.

How will you pass on your passwords when you pass away.

If you haven't considered how to make it easy for your family to clean up and/or transfer your online accounts after your demise, then this article is for you. A two part article addressing this can be found here. [Link](#)

The articles have some ingenious solution.

Other ideas can be found here [yourdigitalafterlife](#).

