

Copying Versus Backing Up of Computer Data

By Kelly Smith

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It is inevitable that the hard drive on your computer will crash because hard drives do not last forever. There are steps that you can take to protect your data files so your data will not be completely lost. You can either copy or back-up your computer files.

Your data can be copied to a separate storage medium like a Zip disk or a tape drive, for example. One of the easiest ways to protect data files is to use Windows Explorer to drag-and-drop the folders containing the information to a Zip disk or tape drive installed or connected to your computer system. This copies all the files in the folders to the storage medium. The files can be dragged back once the system is up and running again in the event of a hard drive crash.

Technically speaking, just copying data is not backing it up. Backing up a hard drive makes a compressed copy of the data and programs and stores them on a removable drive. It means that the data is organized so that it takes up much less space than being simply copied. A back up is preferable to just copying the files to a disk. One way to accomplish this is to use the Windows Backup Utility, "Backup", which is launched from the Windows Accessories folder. Another way is to use a third-party back up program such as Iomega's "One-Step Backup and Restore" with its Zip drives, for example. Backup files have to be restored or extracted (uncompressed). The same utility used to restore the back-up should be the one used to back up the files in the first place.

Backing up data files is a most important task but the computer system should be backed up also. A system back up saves all of the software (including the operating system), the software settings, preferences and all data. When the system is restored, you get everything back just the way it was when you backed it up. It is important to create a schedule of automatic backups to back up your hard disk regularly. Ideally, file backups should be performed once a week and system backups once a month (more or less depending on amount of new data).

A true backup is far superior for protecting large amounts of data than simply copying the files to a disk. Backup utilities compress the contents of data files, which means the data is organized so that it takes up much less space than being

simply copied to a disk. Remember that all your hard work does not have to be lost in the event of a computer crash. Take the time to back-up until you get your computer back up!

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