

# Windows 10 Backup / Restore

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October, 2023

There have been a number of questions about backup and more recently “what happens if I actually have to restore something?” The answer to this question is less is more. To clarify we will state two simple facts:

1. If you do have to restore, it will likely be a select number of files unique and valuable to you.
2. A full system restore only works if the target machine is identical to the one that failed!

These statements provide motive for how we want to backup. In this case, simple is better because if it isn't easy to do, we are not going to do it! Here is the basic philosophy we should follow:

- Backup personal data files using simple file copy method at a frequency that meets your work level.
- Perform a complete system backup once or twice a year.

## Use an External Hard Drive!

Use an external USB hard drive! There are hundreds of choices of decent drives with capacity of 1 to 3 TERABYTES. Cost is \$25 to \$100. This is enough space to hold a complete backup plus dozens of personal data backups. Keep in mind if you have a small amount of personal data, a thumbdrive may be adequate for your needs.

- You own and control it!
- Redundancy is easy, just buy 2.
- For increased security, keep it in a fire proof safe and/or at an off-site location.

Avoid the “cloud” like the plague. You should use iCloud, OneDrive or other such services only for very limited, focused purposes. For example; sharing files with family or friends. Examples include photos from a special trip with a group of people or working on a genealogy project with distant family members. The other acceptable application of cloud storage is a SMALL collection of photos you like to accessible on all your devices.



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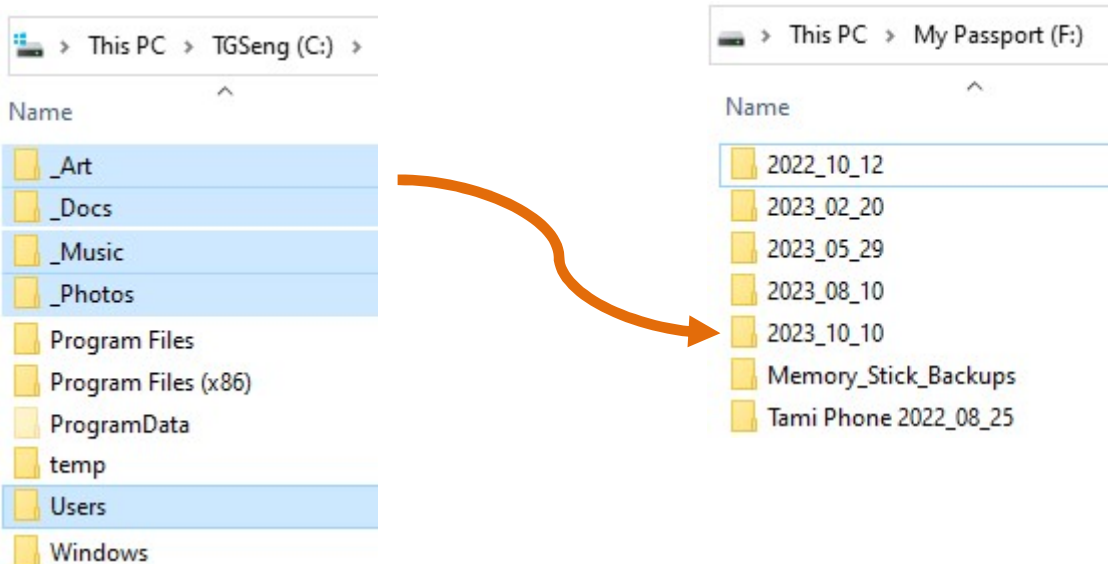
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## Personal Data Backup

I prefer to use a primitive method for personal data storage as it facilitates access to my data with absolutely zero special software and 100% system independence.

1. Create a folder on your backup drive with the current date in the name.
2. Select your personal data folders. Note that I am including the “Users” folder here.
3. Copy or drag and drop the folder(s) into the backup folder.
4. Enjoy breakfast or continue working on your computer.
5. When the copy operation is complete, delete the oldest backup folder.



Isn't that simple? In fact you can create a batch file that can perform this task with a double-click. The benefit of this method is that it is the same since before 1990 and will continue to work for years to come.

## Personal Data Restore

Your personal backup data is immediately usable from any computer directly from the external hard drive. The “restore” procedure is simply the reverse of the backup procedure.

1. Open the desired folder on the backup drive.
2. Select all folders.
3. Copy or drag and drop the folder(s) into the primary hard drive.

## Full (System) Backup

I perform a full system backup only occasionally. A full system backup contains not only your data but the entire operating system, user settings, network logins, and application settings.

I recommend using an OLDER VERSION of Windows Backup or a simple backup program provided on the external hard drive. For example, my Western Digital drive came with “WD Apps” which can be quickly installed (or run) on any windows system straight off the external drive.

## Full (System) Restore

The ability to actually perform a full system restore has the following pre-requisites:

- You have made a system boot disk (floppy, CD or thumbdrive).
- The computer that will receive the full restoration must be almost identical to the crashed system.

It is extremely rare that a full system restore will be possible. I have never been in a situation to use it except in the corporate world where the IT department had shelves of identical “spare” computers. Instead, consider this a part of the laborious process of transitioning to a new computer.

- Startup your brand new windows system and create your primary user exactly as the old (dead) system.
- Install applications from installation media. If you have many downloaded apps, this is a good reason to of saved the installers in an organized fashion.
- SELECTIVELY restore program data app by app from the last full backup. Ask for help on this.
- SELECTIVELY restore user folder(s) such as my documents, My photos and desktop from the last full backup (or your Personal backup). Ask for help on this.
- Restore your latest Personal Data backup (minus the User folder).

Ever since Windows XP, it has become nearly impossible to magically restore all your applications in a single restore operation. This is because of the poor practice of storing practically everything including linkages to program components (DLLs) in the system registry. This fact is what requires the “re-installation” of apps. My favorite Paint program (circa 1997) is one of the few that allows me to install and run it like an old DOS application.

## A Note about Windows Backup

Microsoft (aka the Communist Software Empire) has recently destroyed the built-in Backup and Restore applications. They are now solely OneDrive (cloud) based. If you use that, you might as well take your computer to Starbucks, give it to the first Gen-Z you see and walk away.

I have been able to use the older Windows 10 backup and restore apps from a system yet to be corrupted by recent Windows updates. So for full backups you will have to do this or use a backup application, preferably one that came (and is stored) on your backup drive. The criteria for selecting a full backup application will be simplicity: the backup files must be accessible on a file by file basis. Restoring from an all or nothing backup is th best way to destroy your system.

## Network and Website Passwords

There is a Windows and some 3<sup>rd</sup> party “Credentials Backup” applications that promise to safely store logins for your WiFi networks and web sites you visit. However, with the evolution of different web browsers and frequent changes in Windows this can be tenuous at best. I am not into password managers for obvious reasons so I go old school: a word document that has all my logins and passwords. I print it out and keep it with my passport if traveling without a computer .... and burn the list when I return home. Sometimes the simplest method is the best.

