BACKING UP YOUR FILES

INFORMATION AND DATA LITERACY > 1.3 MANAGING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT

TARGET GROUP	AGE GROUP	PROFICIENCY LEVEL	FORMAT	COPYRIGHT	LANGUAGE
Facilitators	N/A	Level 4	Background information	Protected by United States and international copyright and trademark laws	English

This resource explains some options for backing up files including cloud-based storage and external hard drives.

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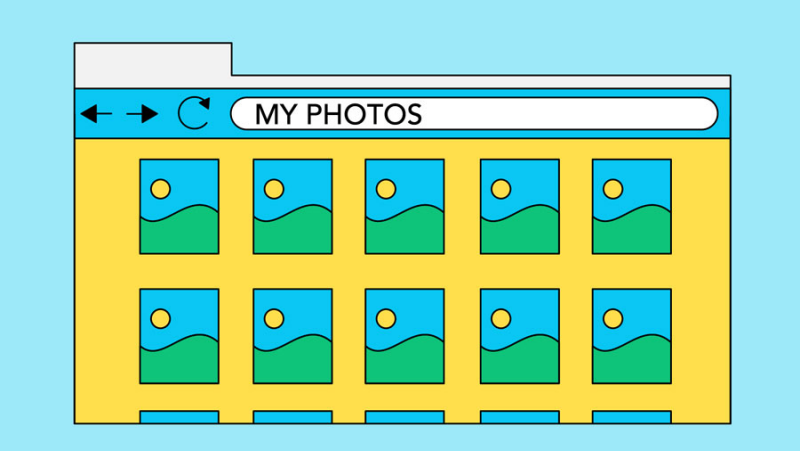
General Objective	Skillset building
Preparation time for facilitator	less than 1 hour
Competence area	1 - Information and data literacy
Name of author	GCFGlobal.org
Resource originally created in	English

WORKSHOP DIRECTIONS

1 Introduction

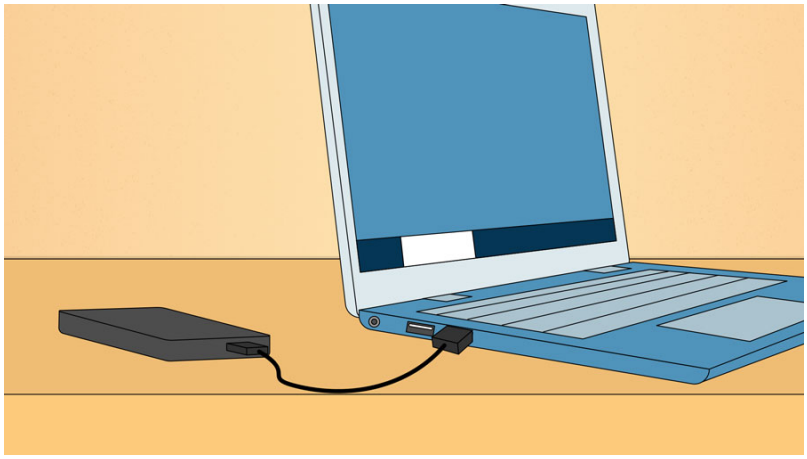
As we become more dependent on technology to help accomplish our everyday tasks, we tend to forget how easily the information stored on our computers can be lost. Imagine what would happen if your computer was **misplaced**, **damaged**, or even **stolen**. Would you lose any important music, documents, photos, or other files?

While it may be possible to repair or recover your computer, the files could be **lost forever**. You can protect your files from accidental loss by **creating a backup** on an **external hard drive** or **online backup service**. Should anything happen to your computer, you can rest easy knowing your files are still safe and secure.



2 External hard drives

One of the easiest ways to back up your files is to copy them to an **external hard drive**. You'll need to purchase an external drive to get started. Western Digital, Lenovo and Seagate produce some of the most popular external hard drives. Conduct some research on which product best suits your storage needs, or ask a computer sales representative for recommendations.

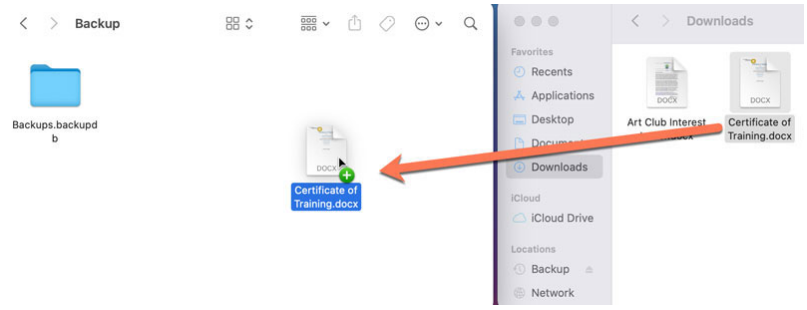


Keep in mind that an external hard drive is subject to the **same risks** as your computer, including fire, theft, and accidental damage. Thus, it is important to keep your drive in a **secure location** (away from your computer) when not in use—we recommend a small **fireproof safe** for greater protection.

3 Backing up files manually

If you only want to back up certain files, you can **copy them** directly to an external hard drive. This is an easy way to protect your **most important** files and folders, like certain documents or an important project.

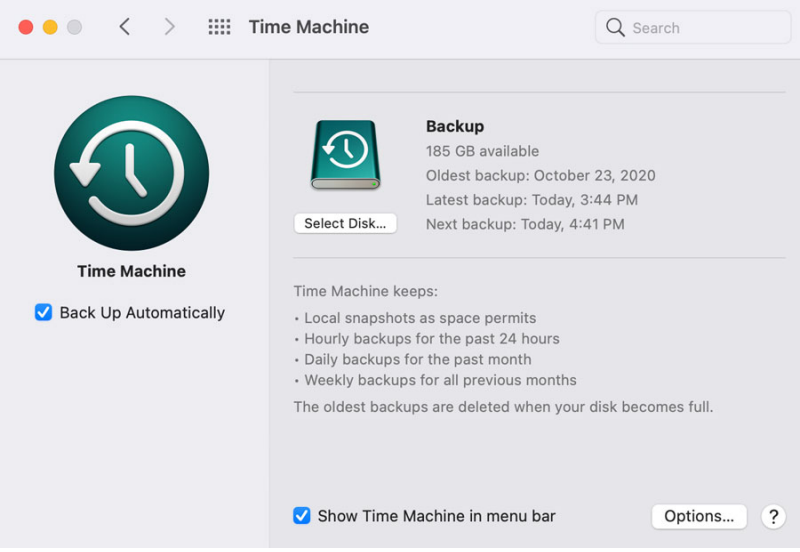
- To back up a file or folder, **connect the external hard drive** to your computer, then simply click and drag the desired items to the external drive. A copy will now exist on both the computer and the external drive.



4 Backing up files automatically

While it's easy to copy files and folders to an external hard drive, it's also **easy to forget**. You never know when you might need to access your files, so you'll want to **back them up regularly** to make sure you always have a copy of the most recent version. To simplify the process, most computers can **automatically back up** certain files or even your entire hard drive.

- **Using Windows**
  Windows Backup (also known as **File History** in Windows 8) allows you to create **automatic copies** of certain files or folders. You can also use Windows Backup to save a **system image**, which creates a backup of your entire hard drive, including your files and any applications you have installed. Check out Windows Backup and Restore from Microsoft to learn more.
- **Using Mac OS 11**
  When active, **Time Machine** automatically creates a backup of your entire hard drive, including your files and applications. If something goes wrong, it's easy to restore your computer to a previous date and pick up right where you left off. Visit Mac 101: Time Machine from Apple to learn more.



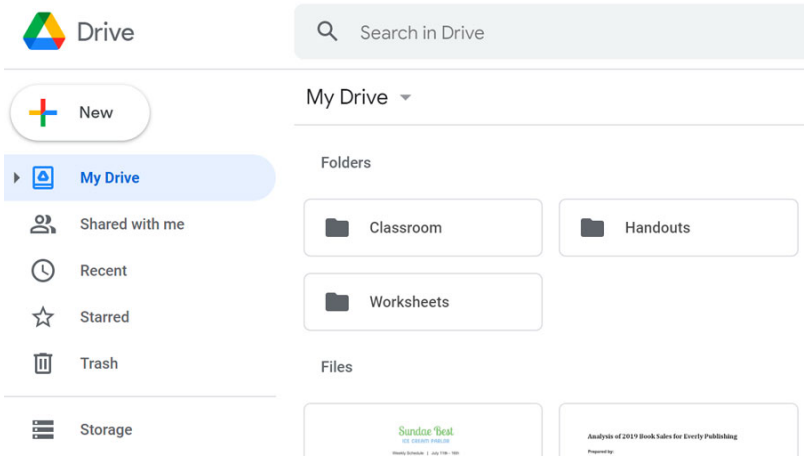
If you choose to back up your entire hard drive, the **initial backup** could take several hours. Select a time when you do not need to access your computer—**overnight** usually works best. Additional backups should be scheduled on a regular basis, but these will usually take less time because the drive will only need to copy your **most recent** files.

5 Backing up your files online

Even if you back up your files regularly on an external hard drive, it's still possible to lose your data. For added security, you can also back up your files **in the cloud**. When you store something in the cloud, it's saved online to servers instead of a hard drive. The **main advantage** of cloud-based storage is that your files are much less vulnerable to risks like theft or accidental damage.

6 Backing up files manually

If you want to back up a few files or folders online, you'll need to **sign up** for an account with a **cloud-based storage service**. Most services will give you a small amount of **free storage**, which should be enough to store your most important files. You can also buy additional storage for a monthly fee.



Best of all, you'll also be able to access your files **from any device** with an Internet connection and **share files** with your family, friends, and coworkers. Learn more about some of the **most popular** cloud-based storage services below:

- Dropbox
  Dropbox is a simple way to back up your most important files online. Dropbox offers **2GB (gigabytes)** of free storage and allows you to **share files** and even **entire folders** with anyone you choose.
- Google Drive

Google Drive is a cloud storage service from Google, offering **15GB** of free storage. From Drive, you can also access **Google Docs**, which allows you to create, share, and collaborate on documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and more. Visit our Google Drive and Docs tutorial to learn more.

- OneDrive
  OneDrive (previously called SkyDrive) is a cloud-based storage service from Microsoft, offering **5GB** of free storage. You'll also have access to **Office Online**, a free online version of Microsoft Office that includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote. Visit our OneDrive and Office Online tutorial to learn more.

7 Backing up files automatically

While simple cloud-based services are great for backing up your most important files, it can be easy to forget to **back up your files regularly**. If you want to **automatically back up** a lot of files or even your entire computer, you'll need to purchase storage from an **online backup service**.

The amount of storage provided by these services varies, and you will have to pay a **monthly or annual fee** for adequate space. While these options may seem expensive, they often cost the same as an external hard drive while offering the added security of storing your files **in the cloud**. Learn about some of the most popular online backup services below:

- Carbonite
  If you don't want to think about backing up your files, Carbonite's **automatic backup** service ensures that all of your files are always up-to-date and there are **no limits** on the amount of storage you can use.
- **iCloud**
  Unlike Carbonite, **iCloud** is specifically designed to back up Apple apps, including documents created with **iWork applications** (Pages, Numbers, and Keynote), as well as content downloaded from **iTunes** and the **App Store**. Any **apps**, **music**, **movies**, or **TV shows** you purchase are automatically backed up if your computer is lost, damaged, or stolen. You can also use iCloud to back up your content and settings for any iOS devices, such as **iPhones** and **iPads**. Initially signing up for iCloud, you'll receive 5GB of free storage.

One drawback to online backup services is that the initial backup **can be very slow**—it may take an extended period of time to upload all of your files. However, subsequent backups should take much less time.