

What files do I need to back up?

Backing up is a job that is often neglected but if you are about to copy your files to a new computer then you must be sure that you have all that you require. Even if you are not going to purchase a new computer then consider the consequences of the total loss of the hard disk and then consider making regular back ups.

One major problem is deciding what files should be backed up. As most users will not have tape drives large enough to back up the entire hard disk, a selective backup must be implemented. There is no point in backing up the operating system (Windows) or the programs themselves, such as Microsoft Office, as these can be re-installed from the CDs.

What must be backed up is your data. Your data files are most likely stored in the folder My Documents and its sub-folders and this is the most obvious folder that should be backed up. However there are many other important files that you should include in your backups such as mail, address books, favourites, and your desktop settings. As well as these are more obscure but important files buried deep in sub-folders that must be considered by most users.

Financial records are usually stored in locations other than in My Documents. MYOB files are .DAT files that usually reside in the \MYOBx folder where x is the version of MYOB that you are using. Quicken files are .Q* files located in \Programs\Quickenw\ folder or you can copy your backup Quicken folder.

Microsoft Office files

Other files to backup are Normal.dot if you are using Word or Wpcset.bif if you are using WordPerfect. These files contain all your customisation of the file locations, layout etc. Normal.dot is usually found in C:\Program Files\ Microsoft Office\Templates and as this can be infected with a Word virus, therefore a copy is a good idea even if you have not customised Word.

If you have customised Excel then the toolbar customisation is stored in a file called Excel.xlb. The actual location of this file varies depending on your versions of Windows and Excel so you should search for *.xlb to locate this file and then you can back it up.

If you have made entries to the AutoCorrect list in Word, then find the *.acl files. Do this via Start, Find, Files or Folders, enter *.acl for the name and look in All Local Hard Drives. Typical file names are MSP1033.ACL.

If you have added words to your custom dictionary then backup Custom.dic which is usually found in C:\Windows\Application Data\Microsoft\Proof.

If you use a schedule program or diary remember to back up its database. For Microsoft users of Schedule the required file is the *.scd usually found in C:\MSOffice\Schedule.

Microsoft has a tool that will save most of the Office XP settings on the Internet. Your Office XP settings, or profile, are a group of settings that defines your Office program preferences and options, including custom dictionaries and custom templates as well as AutoCorrect and AutoFormat lists. This does not come standard with Office XP but you can download the Save My Settings Wizard from:

<http://office.microsoft.com/assistance/2002/articles/oSaveSettingsWizard.aspx>

Another tiny file that you may consider if you have Office XP is Data.dat. If you ever have to perform a clean re-installation then you will be forced to re-register Office. To save time if you are not on the Internet you can copy this file back and you are re-activated. The location of the file varies but with Windows 2000 and XP it is located in C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\ Application Data\Microsoft\Office\Data.

As e-mail is very important to most users, you should consider backing up your received and sent mail as well as the address book.

Address books

The Address Book used by Outlook Express is a .WAB file. Search the hard disk using the Find command to locate this file. It may be located in C:\Windows\Application Data\Microsoft\Address Book but it can be elsewhere. Look at the date when it was last modified to confirm that you have the correct file. Outlook stores all its data in a .PST file.

Eudora's address book file is nndbase.txt and is found in the Eudora folder.

Netscape address book is called Pab.na2. This can be located in a number of places, usually the last sub-folder being your user ID so a search of the hard disk is required to locate it.

Mail

If you use Outlook Express (not Outlook), Netscape or Eudora then you should compact all your folders before backing up to free up disk space. All mailboxes should be compacted regularly. I have seen hundreds of MB wasted on old mail folders that have never been deleted. If you have never compacted your mailboxes then all mail that you have ever deleted remains stored on your hard disk and can be accessed by anyone who knows where to look. The mail reader, a program such as Outlook Express, may show only a few messages in the inbox but all that old mail is still sitting on your hard disk in the inbox! Deleting mail only alters the pointers so the deleted headers are not being shown. Microsoft uses the term "Compacting" to signify deleting permanently.

In Eudora this compacting is done from Special, Compact Mailboxes or by clicking on the numbers in the bottom left-hand corner of the mailbox. In Outlook Express click on File, Folder, Compact All Folders. In Netscape when viewing mail click on File, Compact Folders.

Outlook Express 5.0 and higher stores the mail in files that ends in DBX. Therefore to locate your mail folders, open Explorer and from Tools, Find, Files or Folders search your hard disk for *.dbx. This will then show the names of all your mail folders. Users who are still using Outlook Express 4.0 and 4.01 must search for .mbx and .idx files as these are used to store the mail. These folders are usually found in a location such as:

\\Program Files\\Outlook Express\\<username>\\Mail

\\Windows\\Application Data\\Microsoft\\Outlook Express\\Mail

\\Windows\\Profiles\\<username>\\Application Data\\ Microsoft\\ Outlook Express\\ Mail

Note that there may be more than one Inbox.mbx file, which indicates that you have multiple storage folders.

All Outlook mail, as well as the Contacts, is stored in Outlook.pst which is usually stored in the Windows folder.

Eudora users have their mail stored in the Eudora folder and the received mail is in the file In.mbx, and the file In.toc is the associated pointer file. Sent mail is in the Out.* files. If you have set up other folders then you should backup *.mbx and referable *.toc as occasionally Eudora may not re-generate the pointer file correctly. If there are any attachments that you wish to keep then look in the folder C:\\Eudora\\Attach.

Netscape mail is stored in a text file called Inbox, which is a plain text file and there is an associated file called Inbox.snm. The actual location of the mail folder varies depending on the operating system and the version of Netscape. I suggest that you search for a file called Inbox.snm. Having located these files, look at the date and time to verify that these are correct and then backup the files called Inbox and Sent.

If you are using Outlook and have created rules for filtering, moving or automatically replying to standard letters then these rules should be backed up. The way to do this is via the Rules Wizard, Options, and Export.

Eudora filters are stored in a file called Filters.pce, usually in the Eudora folder.

If you don't know what files your program uses, then make a small change, save the file and use Explorer to find the files that were created in the last day. This is achieved by clicking on Tools, Find, Files or Folders and click on the Date Modified tab. After all the files are listed, click on the Modified bar (Click on View, Details if this is not visible) and the files will be sorted by time and date. Your file should be near the top of the list.

Favourites and Bookmarks

Internet Explorer stores them as tiny files, the default location being \\Windows\\Favorites and the sub-folders. If you are using Netscape Navigator then you will need Bookmark.htm.

Others items

You should back up the settings of your dialler, browser and mail program. After a disk crash and restoration you will need these settings in order to dial in. Recording these settings on paper is preferable. Backing up your Internet dialup settings to disk is possible but it involves using Regedit. However, your ISP will be able to provide a CD or floppy to re-establish your Internet connection.

If you use FTP and have a site manager with many locations, port numbers and passwords then this information should be backed up. The actual files required will depend on your FTP program.

Back up any .Bat files that you have created. If you play games, back up any unsaved games if you have spent a lot of time on them.

If you have scanned in family photos or stored images taken with a digital camera in a folder other than \My Documents then these folders should be included in your backups.

If you use a speech recognition program then the training files should be backed up as these may involve hours of work in the case of teaching specialised vocabulary.

You should back up your Registry files. Although they are not files that pertain to your data, in case of bad disk corruption they will be essential in restoring your system to the current state. With XP the registry is contained in many files and the only way is to export the registry. The resultant file may be over 50 MB

Ensure that you have created an emergency Startup disk and verify that you can boot from it and see both the hard disk(s) **and the CD**.

If you have many files then you should use a program that can compress files, such as WinZip, which can also span the backup file over multiple floppies. WinZip can be obtained from many sites including www.winzip.com, or from many CDs that come with computer magazines.

Having made a backup you should verify that you are able to retrieve your files from that backup.

Finally **do not** back up onto only one set of floppies or one RW CD. If you are having system problems as you may over-write a good backup set of disks with corrupted files, and so lose your backup. It is a good practice to keep several sets of backup disks, or tapes, and use different sets on different days.

Backing up to multiple destinations, such as a second hard disk, tape, CD and Zip drive on the same day will actually reduce your security. This is because there may be problems with some files that you are not aware of and you will overwrite yesterday's good data with a corrupted file, thereby losing your backup. Staggering backups will allow you to recover the previous version.

How to back up

There are many ways to back up. If you have the knowledge, then a BAT file with specific Xcopy commands is a good method. Below is some sample code for copying modified or new files from drive C: to drive D: for a few selected folders, plus samples showing compressing data during the backing up.

```
D:
CD\MyBackups
xcopy "C:\windows\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook\*.pst" /D /Y
wzip -u -spassword excel c:\Excel-data\*. *
wzip -u -rp favorit C:\DOCUME~1\GEORGE~1\FAVORI~1\*. *
CD eudora
xcopy c:\eudora\*. * /D /S /Y
```

The /D switch instructs the DOS xcopy command to copy only new or modified files. This means if you have 1,000 files and you have added one and modified two files, only three files will be copied.

The /S switch instructs to copy all the sub-folders.

The /Y switch instructs to copy without asking if you wish to replace the older files.

If the folder name has a space in it or is longer than eight characters then quotes must be used per the Outlook example above. However, you can still use the DOS file names as per the favourites example shown.

The program Wzip is the command line program that can be used if you have WinZip version 8 or higher. The program can be downloaded from: www.winzip.com/wzcline.htm. The documentation is included and the extensive switches are the same as the original DOS version of Pkzip. The -u switch means to update the zip file with new or changed files and -rp is the instruction to look at all the sub-folders and include the changed files and add the folder names to the Zip file.

Having created this BAT file, you should create a shortcut to it and place the shortcut on the desktop so that each day you can just click on it and backup your important files. Remember that you must not have any application open otherwise the file that is in use will not be backed up.

If you do not have the knowledge or ability to write BAT files then you must use some backup program that can save your preferences. The Backup program that comes with Windows is acceptable. This program is not usually installed and must be added via the Control Panel, Windows Setup. In XP Home edition you must insert the CD then double-click the Ntbackup.msi file from the \Valueadd\msft\ntbackup folder.

Having backed up your files to the folder d:\MyBackups, in the above example, this folder can then be burned onto a CD or DVD and stored off-site. Running the backup procedure should be done daily and CD burned at regular intervals.