

The Importance of Backups

Rule #1: You are only as good as your last successful backup from which you can recover!

The most important thing on your computer (PC or Mac) is not the hardware nor really the software. These can be replaced relatively easily. The most important thing is your data. Period.

Backing up your data can be very simple and painless. For most people, it should not take that much time either. Here are some simple ideas:

- Purchase a “thumb drive” and simply copy any important data to your drive.
- Use blank DVD-R's and your DVD burner – blanks cost less than \$0.20 each.
- Purchase a removable hard drive – you can get 320GB of storage for about \$100 now.
- Most of your data will be located in your “My Documents” folder on an XP machine.
- Certain programs, such as older versions of Quicken or Quickbooks, like to store the data file in the program directory. Always check those programs and move the data file to your My Documents.
- You may not want to backup all your music each time if you have an iPod – that will serve as your backup.
- Pictures, music, and videos take up the most storage space. You may not want to back them up every time depending on your storage capacity.

Off-site backup is very important. It won't do you any good if you backup your data, but your house burns down. Also, thieves steal computers, removable drives, etc. I have had several clients this year who have suffered business and home theft, including their computers. You need to periodically store a backup at a trusted family member or friends house or safety deposit box.

You also need to consider the safety and security of your backups. This means that your backup data should be treated as securely as your live data. With JungleDisk you can encrypt your data so that neither JungleDisk nor Amazon employees have access to your data. If you are using DVD's or a removable drive, then I recommend using TrueCrypt containers to keep the data safe.

My Recommendations:

Primary Backup: JungleDisk which uses Amazon's S3 service. This gives you encrypted off-site backups that is a no-brainer to use and very cost effective. Typically you can have 30+GB stored for less than \$10/month.

Secondary Backup: Every 2 weeks, I copy my TrueCrypt container to a removable USB drive.

Tertiary Backup: Once a month I copy everything to removable DVD's. The files on the DVD's are stored in an encrypted TrueCrypt container, and the DVDs are locked in a fireproof safe.