



BACK-UP IS IMPORTANT. Having painstakingly created many files on your computer, you will need to make sure that you keep them.

To understand the matter, Kevin clarified what backing-up means: that you create copies of your files and store the copies in such a way that, if one set should be lost, it can be recovered by copying the other one – the ‘back-up’.

That’s a very simple, easily understood proposition, but it is a big subject. It means that (at least) two copies of a file must be in existence at all times. Copying photographs from a camera onto a DVD is NOT making a backup if the pictures are then deleted from the camera. If the CD is damaged or lost, you no longer have the files.

To do the job properly, it is important to check that the back-up copy is readable. A back-up CD is not much use if the files turn out to be unreadable. It is sensible test-read the back-up be sure that it will be available when wanted.

Obviously there is a certain amount of time and effort involved in making back-ups. That leads to the first consideration – ‘Which files should I back up?’

Here you are on your own. The need to keep any file safe depends upon its importance to you personally, and your willingness to make the effort. You are the only judge of that. Some files might be unimportant, yet others might be of enormous financial or sentimental value. The lengths you go to will vary accordingly. Some things, such as downloaded music files, might be easily replaced by downloading them again. Snaps of a special occasion might be irreplaceable.

As part of the exercise, don’t forget your contacts/address book, your web favourites or your emails. Some people are more comfortable with a printed copy of important letters or emails.

Quite why you would ever need your back-up is a topic in itself. As Kevin said, don’t be too alarmist about all this, but eventually something will go wrong. You could accidentally delete or overwrite files (or someone else might).

At some point a hard disk drive will fail: (potentially at any time over the next 5-10 years, starting now!) Apart from the hassle, even if the files can be recovered by specialist software, it could prove expensive. It’s so much better to have a back-up handy.

A dropped lap-top could ruin a hard drive. Some viruses are nasty enough to corrupt files. You could suffer a theft or leave your lap-top on a train. What if your house is burgled, flooded or burnt down?

On a positive note, next time we’ll look at how to organise to reduce and simplify the work and consider some storage options.

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In Brief

Computer Club

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