



Computer users create or download files to suit their activities and will want to store and retrieve them. As they are also people, it follows that the way in which this is achieved will be done to suit personal preferences.

As technology improves and the available options increase, it could be worthwhile thinking about how YOU do it; you might find a better method. Mike J and Howard conducted a forum to discuss the main factors to consider.

WHAT? You have to decide which files you want to keep: for example none (spam), some (emails), or all (important letters). The mix is entirely personal. You might want to categorise family holiday snaps depending on the occasion; who is in them or the location – and, of course, the quality of the picture.

WHY? The more files you keep, the longer it will take to find one, so clear out any that you will never want to look at again.

WHERE? Where-ever the original files are kept for convenience, it is essential that copies are kept elsewhere just in case the original is lost or corrupted. For really important files a second or third copy should be kept. (Again, according to the value you personally place upon it.)

Copies are often made to CDs or DVDs which is fine, but the most reliable medium is an external hard disk drive (or two). The increasing capacity and reliability coupled with the falling cost and portability gives them several advantages.

WHEN? This is the “piece of string” question. Once again the personal importance of the files to YOU is of prime concern. The higher the risk or the greater the loss, the sooner the files should be copied to a safe store. Memory sticks are so physically small that they can be easily mislaid. Laptops or notebooks are more likely to be lost or stolen than a desktop. Using a second (or third) external hard drive enables one of them to be kept at a remote location in case your house burns down. (Firms have complete duplicate IT installations in case their office burns down.)

WHO? It must be you unless you are prepared to pay for a specialist service. Some free storage is offered in “The Cloud” – and more if you pay for it. It suits some people and has the merit of being remote and immediate.

HOW? Naturally, if looking after files is time-consuming, things tend to slide. Good habits make life easier. Programmes can (and should) be instructed to store data files they create in locations that suit you. That means all files can be grouped in a specific place rather than scattered about – and that makes them easier to deal with.

More about that and some tips on setting up a useful filing system later.

*Our next meeting is Tuesday 12th November at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth, 7.30 pm to 9.30. **Photo Editing - How to do it. What program to use.** Visitors always welcome. See penarthcomputerclub.co.uk*