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Backup in Windows Vista

Have you ever considered what would happen if your computer one day decided to not work anymore? Your hard drive died or if you get a virus? Or if a careless teenager makes room for that much needed song download by deleting some irreplaceable digital photos?

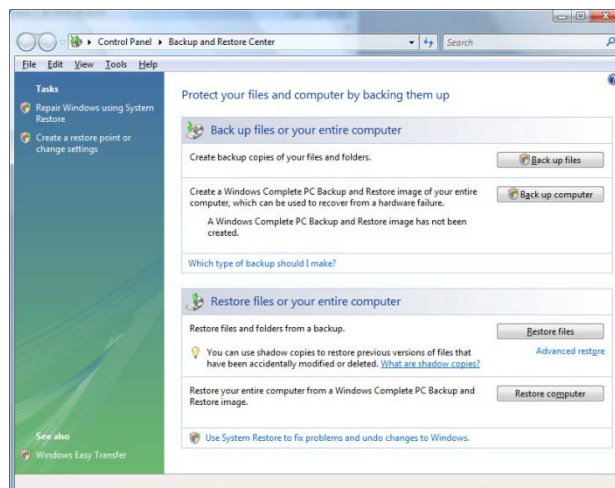
We all store digital pictures, home movies of the kids and grandkids, keep our personal finance, email, contacts, password and much more on our computers. I have over 30.000 MP3's and 20.000 photos; I even took all my parents old photographs and digitized them so that I can forever keep a digital copy that won't fade or degrade. And what about the hundreds of thousand lines of software code I have written for customers and clients. It would be a disaster if I lost them.

Most new computers today are shipped with Windows Vista which is the new Operating System from Microsoft. Wikipedia's definition of an OS is "*A master program that controls a computer's basic functions and allows other programs to access the computer's resources such as disk drive, printer, keyboard, and screen.*"

In Windows Vista there are no more excuses for not doing backups. It is easy and simple, and even offers some very interesting features once you have your backup.

If you have ever heard of Microsoft Virtual PC, you will be happy to know that the backup-files can be opened and used as just that. What it means is that once you create your backup, you will be able to open a second copy of your computer somewhere else virtually. But enough about that, let's get back to the backup. If enough interest gathers I'd be happy to write a more in-depth article about Virtual PC and why it's something most people can benefit from.

The program you are looking for in Vista is called **Complete PC Backup** and can be found by either searching for it in the **Start Menu**, or by clicking **Start → All Programs → Maintenance → Backup and Restore Center**. This will bring up this dialog box:



Here you can choose to back up individual files or your entire computer as well as restore previous backups you have performed.

This article will focus on a complete backup since this would be the preferred action. If you do decide to just backup individual files it will offer you to save the files on a network share or drive on another computer. It automatically suggests all your documents and you will be able to select additional files and set a schedule.

I would suggest you purchase an External Hard drive. They're extremely cheap and versatile, and I would be more than happy to help you out, should you need one. My contact information is at the end of the article. Depending on size and brand they range in price from about \$100 and up and plugs into your USB port without any other installation.

Click on "**Back up Computer**" and Windows will identify possible Backup devices that can be used to store the backup.

If you do not have an external hard disk or storage device attached, it will give you the option to back up to DVD. Select the appropriate choice for you and click **Next** where you get to confirm your backup settings and you can click **Start Backup** when you are ready. If you selected DVDs as Backup media, it will estimate the number of DVD's you are going to need.

If you ever need to restore, just follow the steps to open the Backup and Restore Center and select Restore, then follow the wizard to get your files back.

One downside to the built in complete Disk backup is that you cannot backup to a server or drive on another computer. This would have been a nice feature.

Wherever you decide to keep your backup, you should always store it away from the computer, preferably in a safe or in your bank deposit box. That way should something happen, you have at least one less thing to worry about.

For Windows XP users the backup program is located in **Start → All Programs → Accessories → System Tools → Backup**. It looks less fancy than its Vista counterpart but will actually let you backup to a network share or networked computer and it will even let you set a schedule for this backup to be run on intervals. It also allows you to restore individual files should you have lost or deleted some by accident.

Remember to label the backup appropriately with a Date and what was backed up so you know, and also add a reminder in your calendar for the next backup so you remember to do it. We all find the backup procedure tedious, but it is a necessary evil. I do my backups weekly, but for most people monthly will probably suffice. The way I see it is **How Much Do I Want to Lose**. If I lost more than a week worth of work I would be in trouble.

For more information about Vista or if you need help with your computer (or need a computer) feel free to give us a call, we're right here in North Hampton ready to help.

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