

BACKUP YOUR IMPORTANT FILES WITH WINDOWS 10'S FILE HISTORY

(a second drive is required)

File History automatically backs up files that are in your Documents, Pictures, Music, Videos, email contacts, web favorites, Microsoft OneDrive files and files on your desktop. If the originals are lost, damaged, or deleted, you can restore all of them. You can also find different versions of your files from a specific point in time. Over time, you'll have a complete history of your files. If you have files or folders elsewhere that you want backed up, you can add them to one of your existing Documents, Pictures, Music, or Videos folders.

With File History turned on, you will be able to archive copies of older versions of your files and do so automatically and in the background while you work. It is, for all intents and purposes, a real-time backup tool.

By default it preserves only those files in your Documents, Music, Pictures, and Videos folders. You can add other folders if you wish, but only by adding them to one of the major folders listed here. (You can also exclude folders that you don't want, for example, your videos, to be backed up.)

File History requires an extra internal hard drive or some kind of external storage: a large-capacity USB flash drive, USB hard drive, or network drive. The more space you devote to File History, the deeper your backup will go.

Here's how to get started with it:

1. Type **file history** from the Start box.
2. Click the *File History* link that appears in the search results.
3. By default, the feature is turned off. Have ready whatever storage device you intend to use (an internal hard drive, an external hard drive or a large capacity flash drive).
4. Then click the *Refresh* icon next to the address bar. If you're using network storage, click *Use network location* instead, then choose your desired drive.
5. Click the button marked *Turn on*.

6. File History will make an initial backup of your folders, then scan those folders once per hour and make additional backups of any new or changed files it finds.

If you need to recover your files, just return to the File History window and click *Restore personal files*. (You can also manually navigate into the File History folder created on your storage drive, but you'll have to click through numerous sub-folders to find your data.)

This is a decidedly handy feature that's worth devoting a large-capacity flash drive to, if only to preserve your most precious documents.

UNDERSTANDING WINDOWS 10'S FILE HISTORY

The trouble with traditional backups. Until relatively recently, the best backup tools for Windows came from third parties — not Microsoft. But that's changing. Although Windows XP included a basic backup applet and Vista had a better one, it was not until Windows 7 that Microsoft shipped a complete, built-in backup and recovery system with its desktop operating system. And there's also still a myriad of top-quality, free and commercial, third-party backup tools available.

Unfortunately, a wealth of backup options hasn't convinced most Windows users to make regular backups. For many, the process is still too much of a hassle.

Windows 10's goal: No-effort system backups. File History is a backup application that **continuously** protects your personal files stored in **Documents, Pictures, Music, Videos, Desktop, Favorites, and Contacts folders**. It periodically (by default **every hour**) scans the file system for changes and copies changed files to another location. Every time any of your personal files have changed, its copy will be stored on a **dedicated, storage device** selected by you. Over time, File History builds a complete history of changes made to any personal file.

File History works and it's undeniably easy to use. Its all-but-invisible, automatic backups will be a boon to the majority of users who never before bothered to make backups.

File History's default settings might not suit you. So let's take a look at the available options, advanced features, and alterations.

You can force File History to back up *any* folder — including Program folders — by adding those folders to an existing or new library.

Using File History to restore files and folders. Just as it's easy to get File History started, it's also easy to recover your data from File History.

Here's the short-form how-to: While at the File History dialog box, click the **Restore Personal Files** option (from the list of options along the left side). A new window opens showing the most recently backed up files and folders.