

USE WINDOWS' FILE HISTORY TO BACK UP YOUR DATA

File History is Windows' main backup tool, originally introduced in Windows 8. Despite the name, File History isn't just a way to restore previous versions of files—it's a fully-featured backup tool.

To use File History, you will need to connect an **external drive** via an available USB port to your computer. Once you have the application enabled, Windows will automatically back up your **data files** to it. Leave it connected and Windows will back up automatically on a schedule that you establish.

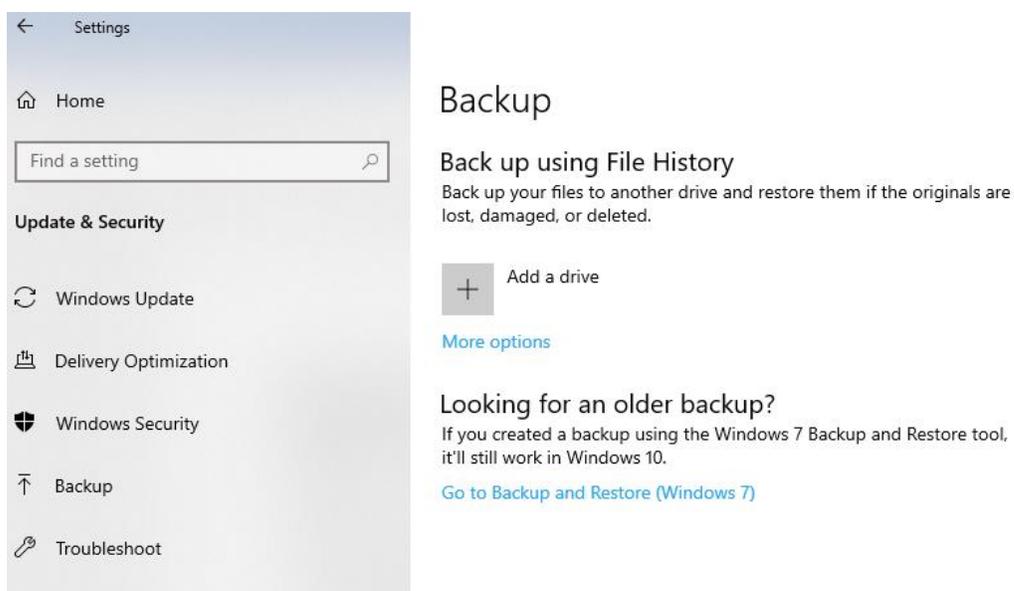
How to Enable File History

File History is designed to be quick and easy to enable, unlike other complex backup tools.

To enable it, first connect an external hard drive to your computer.

Next, open **Settings** (Windows + I). Navigate to **Update & Security > Backup**.

Click the “*Add a drive*” option under *Back up using File History* to add an external drive to which File History will back up. It will list any and all connected external drives and give you the option to back up to one of them.



Select a drive, and Windows will use it for File History. After a couple second delay, the “Automatically back up my files” option will appear and be automatically turned on. Windows will automatically start the back up your files to the drive that you selected.

How to Configure File History

Select “More options” to configure how often File History backs up, how long it keeps those backup copies, and—most importantly—which files it backs up.

File History automatically backs up your files every hour by default, but you can select a different time. You can choose once every 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour, 3 hours, 6 hours, 12 hours, or once per day.

It will normally keep your backups forever, but you can have it delete them when they become one month, 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 1 year, or 2 years old. You can also have File History automatically delete backups as necessary to make space on your File History drive for new backups.

If you want to backup additional folders, click on *Add a folder*

Backup options

Overview

Size of backup: 0 bytes

Total space on Local Disk (E:) (E:): 220 GB

Your data is not yet backed up.

[Back up now](#)

Back up my files

Every hour (default) 

Keep my backups

Forever (default) 

Back up these folders



Add a folder

By default, File History will be set to back up important personal folders in your File Explorer's folder. This includes the Desktop, Documents, Downloads, Music, Pictures, and Videos folders. It also includes the Roaming folder where many programs store application data, your OneDrive folder, and other folders that you choose.

You can check the full list of folders in this window and add more folders. Select "Add a folder" and you'll be able to choose any folder on your computer to back up. You can also select a folder here and use the "Remove" button to prevent Windows from backing it up.

You'll also find an "Exclude these folders" section that allows you to exclude specific subfolders from being backed up. For example, you could have Windows automatically back up every folder in your Documents folder but ignore one particular folder.

To start backing up to a different drive, use the "Stop using drive" button. This allows you to stop backing up to your current drive and start backing up to a new one. The backups won't be deleted, but Windows can only be configured to back up to one drive at once.

How to Restore Files from Your Backup

To restore files from your external drive, go to Settings, select "Update & Security," select "Backup," select "More options," scroll down to the bottom of the window, and select "Restore files from a current backup."

If you have File History backups you created on another computer, just set up File History on the new computer and select the drive containing your old File History backups. They'll then appear in the Restore Files interface so you can restore files, just as you could if the backup was created on the current computer.

This interface will allow you to view your backups and restore files. Browse the available files and select one or more files or folders. You can preview them by right-clicking them or select them and click the green button to restore them to your computer.

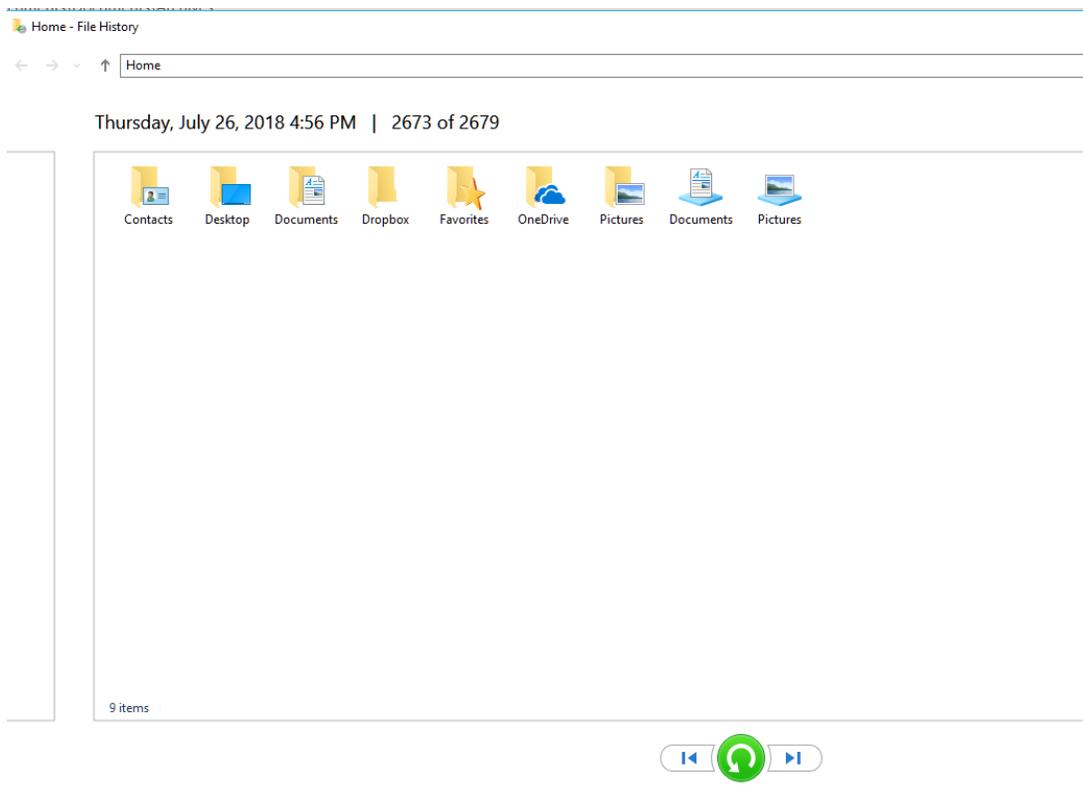
How to Retrieve files from File History

The first time you activate File History on an external drive, the process of storing your selected files will take a long time. However, subsequent backups will store

only those data files that are new or changed since the last backup and the process will move much faster.

To observe your entire File History timeline, from the Backup Options page, click on *Restore files from a current backup* that appears at the very bottom of the page.

To choose a time period, click the arrow buttons or the panes at the side of the window. You'll also be informed how many different backup time periods are available. For example, in the screenshot below, the "2673 of 2679" at the top of the window indicates there are 2679 available backups, and we're viewing the 2673rd one. There are 2672 older backups available, as well as six newer ones.



How to Restore Files from Within File Explorer

You can also quickly restore a previous version of a file from File Explorer. Open File Explorer, right-click the file you want to revert, and click "Restore previous versions." You can also click "Properties" and then select the "Previous Versions" tab.

Any available previous versions of the file from File History will be listed here. You can preview them, restore one to its original location, or restore a previous version to a different location on your computer.

You can also view previous versions and deleted files that were in a specific folder. To do this, navigate to the folder in File Explorer, click the “Home” tab on the ribbon bar at the top of the window, and click “History.”

You’ll be presented with a list of files you can restore that were once in the folder. This is the same interface you’d use when restoring files normally, but File Explorer allows you to start from within a specific folder to speed things up.