

WHAT'S THE AVERAGE LIFE-SPAN OF A HARD DRIVE?

As for the average life of the hard drive in your computer, well, that depends mostly on whether it's a traditional hard drive or an SSD. Here's the basic breakdown though, and some average life expectancy:

Hard Drives: Traditional hard drives (also known as HDDs), which you'll usually find in desktop computers and some cheaper laptops, will often fail sooner because they use moving parts. The average life of a hard drive depends on a lot of things, like the brand, type, size, and interface method, but you're looking at about **four years** on average. Online backup service Backblaze studied the drives in their infrastructure and found about 80% of them survived for four years. Of course, that also means 20% didn't and failed sooner, most of those in the third year of use. Similarly, the brand of drive you use makes a difference. Seagate, for example, failed much more frequently than Western Digital or Hitachi drives in Backblaze's tests. In short, keep your data backed up, watch for SMART alerts, and keep an eye on your hard drive's warranty. Most are about two to three years, and while your drive may last much longer than that, be ready for failures after that point.

Solid State Drives: Solid state drives, which have become extremely popular in laptops and desktops for their faster speeds, are different. You may hear people say that you have to be careful with SSDs because they have a limited number of reads and writes. In reality, consumer SSDs actually last a really, really long time under normal use. TechReport's famous SSD endurance test showed us that a lot of those fears are over-blown, and even consumer SSDs managed to survive writing and reading well over 700TB of data. These drives usually come with a three to five year warranty, and manufacturers assume you'll write 20GB-40GB per day in data. That means to get to that 700TB, you'd have to do 40GB every day for 17,500 days, or about 50 years. That doesn't mean you should mistreat your drive, and it doesn't mean SSDs won't fail due to other issues, but if you're worrying your SSD will die because you used it too much, don't.

Of course, all of this is average data. Your experiences may differ, and you may wind up with a great drive that lasts forever, or another one that fails a few days out of the box. That's why it's important to keep your systems backed up. Beyond that though, stick to trusted brands with solid warranties that don't make it a nightmare to return a drive that dies before its prime.