

## What to Back Up (May 2013)



In a previous newsletter I discussed in general terms how to do a backup (see the newsletter titled "Backing Up Your Data" at <http://steve.gimnich.com>). In this month's newsletter, I will cover what to back up as it relates to Windows computers (each item applies to Apple computers as well, although the details will vary.)

**Documents:** all your documents should be backed up. These are typically found in your My Documents folder, but might also be in shared folders or on your Desktop. These are typically the documents that either you created or received, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Adobe PDF files.

**Pictures:** all your pictures should be backed up. These are typically found in your My Pictures folder. They might have been taken by you with your digital camera or sent to you from friends and family.

**Music:** most of us these days have extensive digital music libraries. These can often be recreated, but that would take a lot of time. So the best thing is to back up your My Music folder (which also contains your iTunes library if you are an iTunes user).

Videos: if you have purchased digital videos, you should back these up too. The files are probably in your My Videos folder.

Email: if you use a desktop email application such as Outlook or Windows Live Mail, then you will likely want to back up your email as well. Your email data is kept in a different location on your computer depending on your version of Windows and version of mail application. Outlook email is typically stored in PST and OST files that are stored in hidden folders on your computer. For Windows Live Mail, the simplest thing to do is to use the application's export capabilities. Don't forget to export your contacts as well.

Business Applications: business applications such as Quickbooks and others, similar to email applications, have their own unique mechanisms for storing and backing up data. You will need to learn what those are in order to perform back ups.

Browser bookmarks: if you have created lots of bookmarks, you may wish to back these up as well. Each browser has its own mechanism for performing this function, typically referred to as an Export function.

System Images: in general, applications and operating systems, unlike data, cannot be backed up. An exception to this is system images. Windows contains an application for creating a system image and a mechanism for restoring the image. The system image is an image of **everything** on your computer. It can take an hour or more to create the image and the image is typically quite large (around 100 GB). In conjunction with creating the system image, Windows also provides a mechanism for burning a Windows Recovery DVD, should you need to restore the system image onto a new hard drive.

In general, a practice of daily or weekly data backups and monthly system image backups provides a good comprehensive approach to back up.

As you can see, there is a lot involved with back up. But regardless of the effort, it pales in comparison to what you will feel the day your hard drive crashes and all of your precious data is gone forever if you did not create back ups.

*As always, I hope you have found this information useful. If you do not wish to receive these emails in the future, let me know.*

*This newsletter, as well as all past newsletters, can be found on my web site (<http://steve.gimnicher.com>)*