COMPUTER NEWS from the

As found on the web and other sources

Free Online Backup and Software Options

From "askbobrankin.com".

Did you know... March 31 is World Backup Day? You know you need to backup your computer, but who has a lot of money to spend on getting it done? Here's some good news -- I've got some FREE options for online backup, and free backup software that you can start using today. Read on to learn more about backup options now...

Free Backup Software and Services

If you run a business on your computer, or just use it to store your personal documents, photos and music, a hard drive failure can be devastating. Failure to backup up your data on a regular basis can lead to data loss, heartbreak and costly recovery fees. If you're not convinced, see my personal story in How I Got Hacked... And Why You MUST Have a Backup! I've heard plenty of excuses for not backing up, but fortunately "backup software is too expensive" no longer applies.

There are several free backup software tools and even free online backup services that you can use to backup and restore your files. There is a free backup utility that comes with Windows XP and Vista. I don't generally recommend it, because the feature set is pretty basic, and not all features

are available in all versions of Windows. However, Windows 7 has a much improved backup feature. See my article [Windows 7 Backup and Restore](#) for the pros and cons.
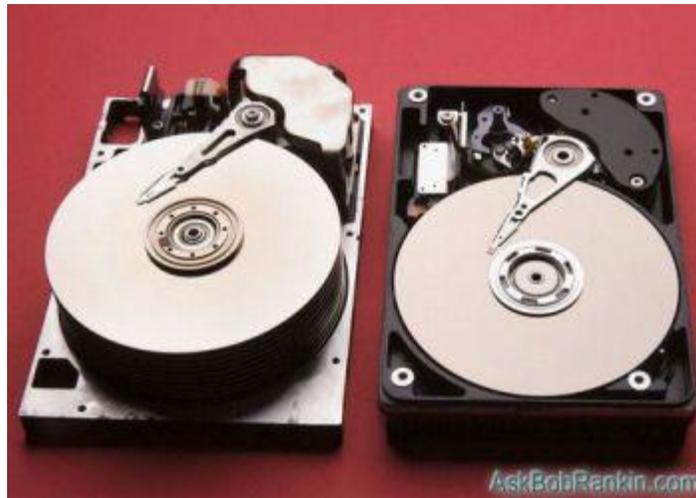

If you have a Mac, Time Machine is an excellent automatic backup tool that's built into Mac OS X Leopard and higher. Backups are automatic, and if you lose a file, or need to see how it looked in the past, you can recover it with a few clicks. Speaking of Time Machine, Windows 8 has a new feature called File History that offers similar features.

The free backup software that comes with Mac and Windows computers will do the job, but other 3rd-party backup products offer more features and flexibility. So let's look at a handful of free downloadable backup solutions.

Free Downloadable Backup Software

[Easeus Todo Backup Free](#) is widely touted as as top choice for free backup software. Aimed at Windows home users, and designed for ease of use, Todo Backup Free offers "one-click backup and restore" to protect your files and help you recover in the event of a data disaster. The software backs up your entire hard drive including the operating system and installed software. You can schedule your complete backups to run automatically, or backup only selected files and folders on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

[Macrium Reflect Free](#) is best known as a tool to make system images, but it's also an excellent backup software option. It can clone a hard drive (make an exact file-for-file copy) or create a backup image with optional incremental updates. I use Macrium Reflect to create a weekly backup image and daily incrementals, so my backup is never more than one day old. You can also use it to backup just selected file or folders. The scheduling feature lets you automate your backups. The user interface of Macrium Reflect isn't quite as intuitive as other products, but it does offer outstanding flexibility and some advanced options that power users and system admins will love.
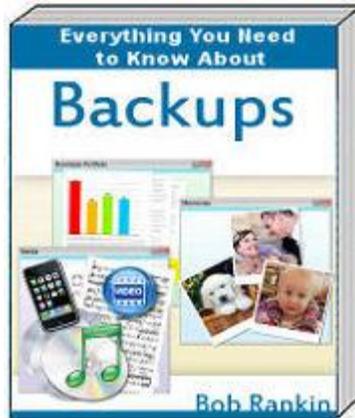
Are you prepared for a total loss of your hard drive due to a virus, hardware failure or some other disaster? I encourage you to read my ebook Everything You Need to Know About BACKUPS, where you'll learn about backup strategies and how to protect the data in your computer, tablet, smartphone and online accounts.

CrashPlan started as a commercial backup service, but the software is now available for free (PC/Mac/Linux). You can use the free version of CrashPlan to backup to an external hard drive, but it also has one unique feature I really like. If you have more than one computer, you can install CrashPlan on each, and they'll backup each others' files. You can even back up your data to a friend's computer, over the Internet. CrashPlan encourages users to have redundant backups -- multiple copies of your backup -- for maximum protection. See my article describing CrashPlan, and how I use it to "backup my backup."

Another good choice is Comodo Backup. If you are familiar with the Comodo name then you know that this software manufacturer has a good reputation. Comodo Backup works with Windows XP and later Windows versions. It will allow you to backup your files and store them in a folder on your hard drive, a portable storage device or on an FTP site. This program also allows you to schedule your backups and compress your ZIP files to save disk space.

Every time I write about backups, several readers mention Microsoft's SyncToy. This free tool isn't a full-featured backup program, but it lets you sync folders on your desktop or laptop with a flash drive, external hard drive, or a shared folder on your home network. You can use it to make sure that two folders are synchronized with the same files, by automatically copying, renaming or deleting files as needed. The sync can be configured to copy files in one direction only, or to always ensure that the latest copy is available in both folders, regardless of where the file was modified.

Free Online Backup Services

There are still a few companies that offer free online backup services. One of the most well known online backup services that still offers free accounts is Mozy. Mozy's Free Backup Service offers 2 GB of storage space for Windows and Mac users. Your backup files will be encrypted and

stored in a secure, remote location that's only accessible to you. This service is compatible with Windows as well as Mac OS X 10.4 and higher.

You might also check into IDrive's free account, which offers you 5 GB of storage space. To learn more about online backup services and other free online storage options, see my article Ten FREE Cloud Backup Services.

Selecting a Free Backup Option

Obviously you have many backup options to choose from, and I've only mentioned a few of the choices in each category. So which is better, local backup, or an online backup service? Some people are nervous about the security and privacy of online backups. But if you do backups locally, there's always the chance that your backup media could be lost or corrupted.

I recommend a combination approach, with copies of your backup files stored in more than one location. A good start would be a full backup on an external hard drive, and your critical files stored online. For more tips and advice, see my related articles Demystifying the Backup and Online or Local Backup: Which is Best?.

Post a comment and tell me about YOUR backup strategy. Also mention if you use free backup software, or a commercial backup solution.

Read more:
http://askbobrankin.com/free_online_backup_and_software_options.html#ixzz33hNTgfxX

Report is Windows 8 Doomed; Win9 Beta Preview in Fall
By Brandon Dimmel on July, 7 2014 in "INFOPACKETS.COM"

A new report suggests that when it comes to Windows 8, **consumers continue to be very hesitant** about upgrading to Microsoft's latest operating system - even two years after its release. That has led some experts to suggest that there's no hope left for Windows 8, leaving Windows 9 to carry the slack (reportedly due in the spring of 2015).

Windows 8 was released **amid some controversy** in the summer and fall of 2012. Perhaps the most debatable part of the operating system was its tile-based **Metro user interface** (now called "Modern"), which embraces touchscreen technology. It was part of Microsoft's attempt to expand its presence in the mobile market, but left many long-time Windows users very upset.

Windows 8's Market Share Dips: Report

Those frustrations have apparently left many consumers unsure about upgrading to Windows 8, and it shows in the operating system's market presence. According to a new report from market research firm Net Applications (which released a similar report on **Internet Explorer's popularity** last week), as of June 2014, Windows 8 and Windows 8.1 account for just 12.5 per cent of the total desktop and notebook market. That's down from 12.6 per cent in May 2014.

Meanwhile, more than half (50.55 per cent) of all desktop and notebook users continue to use Windows 7, Windows 8's predecessor. Incredibly, one in four users still employ the decade-old **Windows XP, which Microsoft no longer supports**, despite **major security risks**.

But it's not all bad news for Microsoft, which continues to dominate the PC operating system market. That's especially true, considering that Apple's Mac OS X operating system currently accounts for just under 4 per cent of the market. (Source: **techrepublic.com**)

Corporations Reticent to Embrace Windows 8

Still, the market share decline of Windows 8 is reason for concern. Computerworld editor Preston Gralla points to the **widespread refusal of corporations to buy computers equipped with Windows 8** as the major reason for its continuing struggles. In fact, many enterprise users continue to buy machines running Windows 7.

"There's no hope that Windows 8 will ever be a success ... even Microsoft recognizes that," Gralla says. "So as things stand now, Windows 8 seems to be the worst operating system Microsoft has ever released. Few will miss it when it's gone." (Source: **computerworld.com**)

Windows 9 Beta Preview Due This Fall

Reports suggest that Microsoft is to release **Windows 9 Preview** in the fall of 2014 and is due to be available to consumers sometime in the spring of 2015. It's speculated that the preview release will come shortly after Windows 8.1 Update 2 is delivered to existing Windows 8 machines.

It's also said that Microsoft will not be bringing the Start Menu back with Windows 8.1 Update 2, but is instead planning to deliver that change with Threshold, otherwise known as Windows 9. In short, Threshold will bridge the gap between Windows 7 and 8 by bringing many new features tailored toward desktop PC users that primarily use mouse and keyboard, and optionally touch-based technology. (Source: **zdnet.com**)

What's Your Opinion?

Are you surprised that Windows 8's market share is actually declining, even after Microsoft terminated security support for Windows XP? Have you been satisfied with the changes offered in Windows 8.1? What do you think Microsoft needs to do with its next operating system (codenamed "Threshold") to win consumers back?

DropCam Vulnerable To Hijacking

From "darkreading.com".

Researchers at DEF CON to demonstrate flaws in a popular WiFi video monitoring system.

That handy plug-and-play webcam-based video monitoring system used for keeping any eye on the house while you're away at the beach, the kids at daycare, and small businesses after hours, also can be turned against you by bad guys, a pair of researchers found.

Patrick Wardle and Colby Moore of Synack -- who will demonstrate the security weaknesses in the WiFi security camera system at the DEF CON 22 hacker conference in Las Vegas next

month -- discovered a Heartbleed vulnerability and other software and hardware weaknesses in the DropCam equipment used in the cloud-based WiFi video monitoring service.

They found that weaknesses in the devices could allow an attacker to view video and "hot-mike" audio on the cameras to spy on the targets, as well as inject their own video frames into the DropCam feed or freeze frames in order to hide malicious activity, such as a physical break-in.

The researchers reverse engineered the DropCam camera's hardware and were able to insert in it a malware "implant," as well as exploit software vulnerabilities they found in the device's internal software.

DropCam's security holes are yet another example of the inherent risks of IP-based consumer devices, a.k.a. the Internet of Things. Security researchers increasingly are warning about flaws in embedded software in these devices, many of which run older software that may not even receive updates.

"If someone has physical access [to a DropCam device], it's pretty much game over," says Wardle, who is director of research at Synack. "People need to be aware that these devices can be accessed by hackers or adversaries, and they should be scrutinized in the way people protect their laptops," for instance.

Wardle and Moore say DropCam runs older software components, including the Heartbleed-vulnerable version of OpenSSL, and an outdated and unpatched version of BusyBox, an open source Unix toolkit typically found in embedded devices and Android devices.

The Heartbleed bug, a read-overrun flaw in OpenSSL's 1.0.1 and 1.0.2 beta's implementation of the Transport Layer Security protocol's "heartbeat" extension, could allow an attacker to gain access to the contents of the memory from the server to the client and vice versa, potentially exposing passwords and other sensitive data -- including the SSL server's private key. OpenSSL has fixed the bug with a newer version of the software.

"The camera is vulnerable to client-side Heartbleed attacks. You could spoof the DropCam DNS server, and the camera would beacon out," Wardle says. "You could throw a Heartbleed exploit and start dumping memory and get [digital] certs," for example.

[Encryption gets a big wakeup call -- and a little more scrutiny. Read SSL After The Heartbleed.]

He and Moore, who is security research engineer at Synack, also found they could theoretically trigger a known bug in the older version of BusyBox running on the video cameras.

"A lot of the software is really old, and there's a lot of potential for vulnerabilities to go unnoticed and unpatched," Moore says.

The researchers also found that they were able to open the back of the camera, where they found a serial port header, which had a serial console that they used to "root" the camera. They then found that the camera's USB connection could be abused to upload malicious firmware to the

device -- all merely by holding a button on the back of the camera and connecting it with some software. "Given physical access, an attacker could root the device without popping it open," Wardle says.

They also found a flaw in DropCam where, when an OS X machine is used to configure it, any user on that OS X machine can "write" to that application. "When you connect to the OS X computer, the app on DropCam is mounted with writeable permissions," Wardle says. "So if an attacker has access to a Mac, he can wait until the DropCam is plugged in and then infect the configuration utility... and write to it."

The researchers built an "implant" that can infect computers used to configure the DropCam.

The bottom line is that a targeted DropCam could be hijacked to steal information and to wage other attacks. "Don't trust a camera from strangers," he quips. "A targeted DropCam becomes a full-fledged computer you can fully remote control and launch other attacks from it. Whenever it's plugged into a Mac or Windows machine, we can inspect that computer."

DropCam, which last month announced it would be acquired by Nest, has fixes for some of the flaws in the works, the researchers say. As of this posting, DropCam had not responded to a press inquiry on the researchers' findings and possible patches.

The researchers will provide demonstrations and more details on their findings at DEF CON on Aug. 10 in their presentation, "Optical Surgery: Implanting a DropCam."
Kelly Jackson Higgins is Senior Editor at DarkReading.com. She is an award-winning veteran technology and business journalist with more than two decades of experience in reporting and editing for various publications, including Network Computing, Secure Enterprise Magazine, ... View Full Bio

Measure Your Internet Speed

Category: Networking **FROM "askbobrankin.com".**

'How fast is my internet speed?' is a common question. There are quite a few definitions of internet speed and several free ways to test it. Here's the scoop on Internet speed tests, and why you definitely should check your speed every once in a while...

What is My Internet Speed?

By "internet speed" most people mean, "how fast I can download things" like web pages, music and movie files, software, etc. Internet service providers tune their connections so that most of their available bandwidth is devoted to downloading and far less to uploading (sending) things.

ISPs do this because a) they know fast downloads are of greater importance to most consumers, and b) they want to discourage people from running high-traffic business Web sites from their consumer priced accounts.

When uploading or downloading, the Internet can be "bursty" at times. That means your file transfer will go very fast one instant and very slowly the next. "Net speed" is generally measured as an average, dividing the time it takes to transfer a file of a given size into the file size. If it takes 1 second to transfer a file of 1 MB, your Net speed is 1 MB/s at that particular time, and between the two particular points.

If you have a DSL connection, your max download speed will be 1.5 - 3 Mb/s. Most cable internet connections will be in the 5-10 Mb/s range, and a fiber optic connection will typically get you between 10 and 50 Mb/s. The higher speeds in each range usually correspond to a higher price point.

Internet speed is not something you can measure and take for granted forever thereafter. Internet traffic may be heavier between different points and between the same points at different times. Local outages on the Internet may force traffic to take detours, lengthening their trips and slowing Net speed temporarily. It's just like a real road system.

Here's another good reason to occasionally run an internet speed test. Your ISP may throttle your internet speed without telling you. At my home, I have Verizon FIOS for Internet service, and I'm supposed to get a blazing 50Mb/s download speed. But twice in the last few years, I ran a speed test and found that it was mysteriously maxing out at 10Mb/s. When I contacted Verizon, they made some lame excuses, and set me back to the higher speed. So run a speed test every once in a while, and make sure you're getting the level of service you're paying for.

Note that when discussing Internet speeds, you'll see both "MB" and "Mb". The distinction is important, because most downloads are measured in megabytes (MB), while Internet service providers offer plans with the speed listed in megabits (Mb) per second. A megabyte is equal to 8 megabits, so if you're cruising the Net at 30 Mb/s, that's about 3.75 MB/sec. Why do ISPs list

their speeds in megaBITS and not megabytes? It's just a marketing gimmick - bigger numbers look better.

How To Test Your Internet Speed

Now that you understand that there is no cut-and-dried, final "knowing" of your Net speed, let's look at a few ways to measure it.

Speakeasy and Speedtest.net are two of the most popular Net speed testing sites online. Both have been around for over a decade, and have evolved with changing technology. But using either is simple. At Speakeasy, you'll have a choice of testing the connection speed between your location and eight cities scattered across the USA. I live close to New York City, and my download speed for that test is consistently at 50 Mb/sec. But as I look westward, it slows down. Downloading from Chicago shows 25 Mb/sec, Dallas 17Mb/sec, and Seattle 12Mb/sec.

SpeedTest gives you a choice of several servers to test locally, with the option to select from servers all over the world. Just click "Begin Test" and watch the odometers spin up. SpeedTest is a nice tool, but just be careful that you don't accidentally click one of the ads instead of running the speed test. Wait for the "BEGIN TEST" to appear inside what looks like an open laptop screen. Then click that link, or slide the cross-hairs to another location on the map to select a different test server. Speedtest will give you several measurements to ponder.

"Download speed" is the rate at which a file of known size was transferred from the test site to your computer. It depends on the location of the test site selected; the amount of traffic on the route between you and the test site; the traffic load on the test site at the time of your test; and so on. But it's a number.

"Upload speed" is the same as download speed, in reverse. A file of known size is generated temporarily on your computer and transferred to the test site. The same caveats apply.

"Ping" is a significant number that most users don't understand. It's more accurately described as "latency," or the delay between sending a request for data to a remote computer and receiving a reply. The Ping speed reported by Speedtest.net is the sum of the latencies between all of the computers that relay your requests and data between you and the test site. To see how many intermediate "hops" there are and their individual latencies, do a traceroute report:

Pingtest.NET will evaluate and grade your internet line quality by measuring ping, jitter and packet loss. You'll need to enable Java in your browser to use this site. (I generally advise people to avoid Java, but in this case, it's safe to temporarily enable it for these tests. See Is Java Safe and Do I Need It? for details.)

Jitter is the average time difference between successive ping tests, and is an indication of how stable (or flaky) your connection is at a given time. As in golf, a lower jitter value (hopefully close to zero) is better.

Packet Loss is an indication of whether you're having trouble transmitting or receiving data with your Internet connection. Any number greater than zero indicates a potential problem, and can result in slower web page loading, longer download times, lagging in online games, and poor quality with streaming media or VoIP calls.

A Bit of Geekery...

You may find it interesting to trace the route from your computer to another site on the Internet. On Windows, click Start, and enter "cmd" to open a command-line window. Type "tracert yahoo.com" and hit Enter. On a Mac, open Applications, then Utilities and click on Terminal. Enter "traceroute" instead of "tracert" on Mac or Linux terminal screens. You can use any domain name you like, instead of yahoo.com. Something like this will slowly appear:

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/howto_measure_your_internet_speed.html#ixzz38s31RTBI

Quote of the month

IF SOMEONE WITH MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES THREATENS TO KILL HIMSELF, IS IT
> CONSIDERED A HOSTAGE SITUATION?

Unknown.