

## **File Backup Made Simple: Backup Software - 1**

*by Vanessa Kier*

Last month I talked about creating a data backup plan. Now that you've decided what files you want to back up, where you will put that backup, and when you want to back them up, it's time to talk about how.

Thankfully, backup software makes this a fairly simple process. This article will focus on three types of backup software: native, bundled, and third party.

Before you back up your files, you need to make one more decision, which will determine what type of software you can use. Do you want a bootable backup?

What, you ask, is a bootable backup? It's a clone of your hard drive, including your operating system files. Normal backups don't include operating system files, just your working files.

Why would you want a bootable backup? Let's say your computer has crashed. If you've done a regular backup, in order to work with the restored backup file of your manuscript you need to first find a working computer that has the appropriate backup/restore program to extract your backup file. Then that machine has to have the same software you used to create your manuscript. This probably isn't a big deal if you use Microsoft Word, but for someone like me who writes in Storyist, a writing-specific software, finding a compatible machine would be very difficult. However, with a bootable backup all I have to do is take my external hard drive to another MacBook and I'll be able to work directly in Storyist as if I was working on my own computer.

If you want a bootable backup you'll need a compatible external hard drive, since not all drives can be formatted to be a bootable drive. You may have to reformat the drive before you back up for the first time. Just follow the simple instructions that come with the drive. The external drive will also need to have a larger storage capacity than your current hard drive.

Creating a bootable backup takes longer on the first pass than a regular backup, but is well worth the time. Remember, always store your backup in a secure location.

Okay, back to the how-to.

### *Native Backup Software*

Most operating systems come with a backup and restore component. For machines running Windows Vista or Windows 7 go to Control Panel/System and Maintenance/Backup and Restore Center. For machines running OS X 10.5 or later, there's Time Machine, which can be accessed under System Preferences. Both systems offer clear instructions that allow you to set what external device you're backing up to and what files you're backing up.

There are some variations regarding your choice of frequency. Windows Vista Home Basic doesn't have an automatic backup feature, but other versions of Vista, plus all versions of Windows 7 do. You

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can set this for a specific time of day and choose monthly, weekly, or daily. You can also manually back up your files by going to the Backup and Restore Center.

Depending on what version of Windows you're using, you may also have the option to create a system disk which can boot your system in case of an emergency.

Time Machine will automatically back up every hour unless you turn it off. When it's off, you can do a manual backup at any time by clicking on the Time Machine icon in the toolbar. While Time Machine will allow you to restore your system files to a previous point in time, performing Time Machine backups does not give you a bootable backup.

### *Bundled Backup Software*

When you buy an external hard drive, chances are it includes software for backing up your files. You access this software by connecting the drive to your computer, then finding the external drive in your computer's folder list. Open the drive and double-click on the appropriate application. There should be a backup wizard or easy-to-follow instructions.

Why would you choose this option over the native backup software on your computer? This software may offer features and flexibility that your native software doesn't. Things to look for are ease of use, backup frequency, whether you can encrypt your files for greater security, and how long the backups are stored before being overwritten. You might also choose this option if you're working on an older computer that doesn't offer a native backup program, or if you want to access your files from both a PC and a Mac.

These usually are not bootable backups.

### *Third Party Backup Software*

Third party software is any software you buy that's separate from both your computer and your external hard drive. There are two reasons why you'd want third party backup software.

In order to create a bootable backup, you might need third party software. Some examples are Handy Backup ([www.handybackup.com](http://www.handybackup.com)) for Windows machines, and Carbon Copy Cloner ([www.bombich.com](http://www.bombich.com)) for Apple computers. Most of these programs do incremental backups after the initial clone is created, giving you an up-to-date bootable drive to use in an emergency. These programs have easy-to-follow instructions, making the cloning process relatively painless.

Online backup providers, such as Mozy ([www.mozy.com](http://www.mozy.com)) and Carbonite ([www.carbonite.com](http://www.carbonite.com)), give you the freedom of being able to access your backup files from any computer. In order to back up your data to their servers you need to download their backup management program to your computer. Both of these providers work with Windows and Mac operating systems. Both programs run automatically in the background, so as long as you're connected to the internet, they back up your files for you at set intervals.

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These are regular backups, not bootable backups.

Once you have your backups in place, you should periodically restore sample files to make certain the backups have completed successfully. When your hard drive crashes is no time to discover your backup files are corrupted or incomplete! When testing your backup, make certain you don't accidentally save over your current files.

Depending on how many layers of backup you set up in your backup plan, you might choose to use only one or a combination of the different types of backup software. I back up to one external hard drive using Time Machine (native), to a second, bootable hard drive using Carbon Copy Cloner (third party), and also back up to Mozy (third party). Whatever option you choose, backing up your files is an easy process. So there's no excuse—start backing up today!

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