

What is File History?

File History is an elegant replacement for the old Backup and Restore functions of earlier Windows editions. File History could be the greatest advancement in data security that Microsoft has ever developed.

Why? Because it takes the pain out of making backups regularly, and makes restoring data from backups natural and easy. Significant numbers of people will actually back up their data if File History becomes widely available, and that means a dramatic drop in catastrophes.

File History does not require understanding of technical details like disk images, incremental and differential backups, or painstaking plotting and scheduling of backup plans. It's literally "set it and forget it" until you need to restore a file.

Here is how to set up File History:

Step 1: Plug an external drive into a USB port on your computer.

Step 2: From the Search box, type *file history*.

Step 3: Click on file history settings.

Step 4: Select your external drive and then turn on file history.

What Next?

From now on, File History will silently scan your folders, desktop, favorites, and contacts for any files that have changed or been created since the last scan (the default interval is one hour) and copy them to the external drive. It will keep as many earlier versions of a file as the external storage device permits.

Many (but not all) applications store user-created files in the Windows 10 folders called Documents, Music, Pictures, Videos, and Desktop. Data that resides within these folders (and their sub folders) will be backed up, but data from other places won't, unless you configure File History to include them. You can do so by adding sub-folders to existing folders that are already being backed up. And if needed, you can exclude folders from the backup.

You can browse through the various versions much as you would browse your folders using Windows Explorer. You can preview a file and, if it's the version you want, restore it to its place on your main drive with a click.

How Does it Work? Answer: Just Great!

File History uses fewer system resources than previous backup technologies. Instead of opening directories and directly scanning files for changes, File History just reads a running record of every file change kept by the file system used by Windows. From the running record (journal), File History compiles a list of files that need to be copied without checking the files themselves.

File History adjusts its own performance to accommodate many ever-changing conditions: power source, foreground activity, network availability, and more. When you close a laptop's lid and the device goes to sleep, for example, File History suspends operation and resumes when the device wakes up, automatically and exactly where it left off.

One thing that File History doesn't do is make a full system backup, or system image. It is important that you make a system image on an external hard drive every week, every month, or on a schedule that suits your needs. On lower left part of the File History window, you can find a link for [System Image Backup](#).

If you already have backup software that you like, such as Acronis or Casper, you can use it to make your image backups, and schedule them to run automatically.

File History offers simplicity and peace of mind. It's so easy to set up that there's no excuse for not doing so. Once set up, it constantly and unobtrusively protects all of your critical data. It's almost sufficient reason, all by itself, to switch to Windows 10.