

Be Prepared

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It's happened to many of us. We've made a mistake, hardware crashes or an update causes our PC to go south. You never know when it will happen, but it does. I've developed a plan for just those occasions that helps make the recovery easier.

The first step is an image backup. This allows you to recover the entire system if your hard drive crashes or it is corrupted. Most external hard drives have a program that will do this, or you can use a program such as Acronis Backup. Make sure that you have the backup recovery program saved some place safe so that you can recover the system.

The next step is a second backup, this time of all my personal files. I prefer this to be stored in the cloud. This can get a few, or all my documents, pictures, music, etc. back when I recover. If you own Microsoft Office 365 you have a large cloud repository on One Drive. If not, there is Google Drive, Dropbox, etc. You can also use the windows built-in backup File History available in the Setting app.

Once I have all my backups in place, I create two additional resources. These are a copy of all my currently installed or saved software I have downloaded. I set up a library in file manager called Software and move my downloaded software to it. I categorize the library into folders. They include Applications, Internet or Online, Games, Graphics or Pictures, Multimedia or Music & Video, and Tools or Utilities. I also make sure that this library is backed up with my personal files.

The second of these resources is a catalog of all my software keys. Have you ever tried to install a program on your new computer and lost the key? If so, you understand that this will save you from repurchasing the program. I keep this information in two places. The first is a loose-leaf binder labeled 'Software Bible' with A- Z indexes. When I receive a key for a piece of software, I print the email and the file sheet(s) in my binder under the programs name. The second place I store this information is in a saved folder on my e-mail account. My primary email is setup as 'imap' so that it retains the emails I do not delete in the cloud as well as bringing it into my commuter through my e-mail program. I can then use my e-mail to search for the program and retrieve the key. If that doesn't work I have the 'Software Bible' as a backup.

I hope this will help you to be prepared for an emergency or a new computer.