

When Discs Go Bad

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome

to this month's new members

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HELP DESK

The help desk is open most Thursday nights from 7.00 p.m. If you have an urgent issue please contact by email at above address. Mail is checked daily so we can help you more quickly.

USING EXCEL

Excel is a very powerful programme and you can learn to use its many functions and powers by using the vast range of help available. The Christchurch Library as a huge range of books on the subject from beginners to the most experienced. If you do not want to trudge down to the library help through the internet is enormous. The following are a few sites that are worth looking at.

One of the best is Excel.tips.net, which has thousands of tips and articles and links to other information.

Others to look at:

- [Excel Help](#)
- [About Spreadsheets](#)
- [Tech Tips](#)
- [Genealogy Template](#)
- [Excel Tutorial](#)
- [Home Budget](#)

There is an old saying that there are two kinds of computer users: those who have lost data and those who are about to. Well there are two more kinds: those who regularly back up data and those who don't.

You'll get that grisly joke immediately if you have ever known the pain that comes with deleting the wrong folder by accident, or making changes you regret, or worst of all, having your hard disc fail. All of those photos, and music you have bought on line, videos you have copied from your camcorder, emails, documents all **gone!**

Yet odds on that you do not have at this very moment a complete, current, automated backup of your PC. Despite thousands of warnings guess how many do? Less than **four percent**. Everyone else is flying without a net.

If you don't have much to backup - few photos, music or videos - you may get by using a Flash Drive (8 GB ones are available for about \$50) or a CD/DVD. No matter what you store it on you have to copy it regularly: ideally each time you finish for the day. At least you will only lose that day's work. The problem doing this is that it relies on you doing the backup and in this regard you can fail to be methodic. What you want is a backup that is rock solid, complete and automatic. You don't want to remember to do the backup, insert a disc or Flash Drive.

If you have Mac such as I you will have a really neat programme - Time Machine. This is a forget-it-all that silently backs *everything* - all files and the entire system. It works by having a second USB external hard drive.

Well it happened to me. In mid-May the Mac wouldn't boot. I was in

shock - thousand of photos, genealogy records and business files - all inaccessible. I plugged the external hard disc into another computer and all the files were still available. (Mac's Time Machine does not compress or encrypt the files such as other PC Backup programs do). I took the Mac in to the Apple shop where they found - you guessed it - the hard disc had failed. A new hard disc was fitted and Snow Leopard installed. At home when I booted the Mac it asked if I wanted to restore from Time Machine. This took about 3 hours but Presto! Everything was back as it was about an hour before the disc failed.

Time Machine is one feature that comes with the Leopard and Snow Leopard operating systems that the Mac uses and is probably of its best features that many Windows users lament not having.

One of the most important backups is to do a "disk image" which is a exact copy of your hard drive. The best programs for that are [Norton Ghost](#) or [Acronis True Image](#).

The nearest PC program to Time Machine is [Timeline](#) by Genie-Soft. It is completely free and runs on Windows XP, Vista and 7. It works while you work backing up at intervals that you choose. Acronis also has a continuous file back up at 5 minute intervals. We recommend that you use both a disc imaging program and Timeline. You'll need an external USB hard drive - one for each program - at least the same size as your primary one. If using a disc imager the drive should be bootable.

If your computer fails use the disc image first to restore the main system then Timeline to restore back to your last backup time.

Genealogy Notes

One of the problems with doing research is the huge amount of paper and information that you collect. While you can use your computer for storing this in electronic form if you download from the internet, you often need to print this out and store it somewhere. It is important to put this a system that you can easily access. When this gets passed on to your family can they find and understand what you have done?

While documents can be stored in various folders, you should also consider storing these in some form of computer format. The best format (for now) is pdf. You'll need a flatbed scanner, any type will do, but Canon seems the best. Otherwise a multifunction copier. Use the software that came with your scanner and set the output to pdf. For tips on organizing your material go to [About.com](#)

SCAMS and PHISHING

There is a large number of emails doing the rounds that are scams and phishing. A lot claim to be from a bank saying that they need to update their security software, or something similar, asking you to submit by clicking on a link your bank details and passwords. No bank will ever ask you to do this. Firstly if your bank does send you an email it will be a personal one with your name. Scammers just use a generic one like "Dear Customer". Your email programme can block some of these but not all. If you get any suspicious email don't open it or click on any link - just delete it. If it is from your bank and you are not sure send them an email by typing in their email address. Don't click on any link - even in your address book. Better still ring them. Another scam is arising with cellphones and text messages. Also telephones where someone will ring telling you that "bank" wants to discuss your bank accounts. Hang up or get them to give you a call-back number. Then ring the bank and check if they are doing any calling. Internet banking is quite safe but scammers always will find a way.

One software programme that works well is [Mailwasher](#). It captures your email and filters out junk mail, phishing scams and the like. It is free and is New Zealand written. Worth checking out. For PC's only. The only downside is that the free one only supports one email address

Another trick is people coming to your door wanting you to do a survey, sell you a new phone plan etc. Often these may be a scam. They should have a photo ID. Get their full name and the name of their supervisor. Don't get their phone number but ring 018 and ask for the supervisor whose name you were given. By now the bogus person will have run, then ring the Police.

Windows Recycle Bin

When you "delete" a file, Windows doesn't actually delete it; the OS moves the file to the recycle bin. That way, if you change your mind, you can easily recover it. You pay for this safety net in hard drive space. A file in the recycle bin takes up as much room as it did beforehand, albeit only temporarily. You can control how large the Recycle Bin gets before it starts actually deleting the files inside it. You can also turn it off, so that Windows truly deletes files when you click Delete.

To change your Recycle Bin settings, right-click the **Recycle Bin** and select **Properties**. If you're using XP, you'll find a slider bar which you can use to control how much of the drive can be used by the Bin. Vista and Windows 7 users can enter another number into the 'Custom size' field. To turn off the Recycle Bin, check Do not move files to the Recycle Bin. Remove files immediately when deleted. If you accidentally delete one or more important files, or if they have otherwise gone missing, you just might be able to get them back. But there's no guarantee.

But do not use your computer for any other purpose until you have either successfully recovered the files or given up. Every time you write to your hard drive, you lessen the chances of successful recovery.

1) Check the recycle bin

If you find the file, right-click it and select Restore.

2) Restore it from your backup

Having done regular backups (Yeah right!) you may be able to recover it from the backup. If you have a Mac with Leopard or later it will be on [Time Machine](#).

3) Try free recovery software

You have been warned against writing to your hard drive when you're hoping to recover lost files. In order to follow that warning, you need not only a file recovery program, but a portable file recovery program that you can run from a flash drive without installation. Try [Recuva](#) which is fast, simple, can preview image formats, and works reliably most of the time. Do not restore the files to their original location but a flash drive.

4) Pay for some software

If this doesn't work try [File-Rescue Plus](#). This \$40 program is more powerful. Try the demo first which gives you up to five files. However it needs to be installed

5) Go to a professional

Find a data recovery specialist. Be warned they are expensive so buying a backup drive and software is really cheap after all.

Backup software.

See Previous article. Windows 7 has one built in – [Backup and Restore](#) under Control panel.

Keeping in Touch While Overseas

It is great when you are overseas to keep in touch with family or friends. Many years ago you sent a postcard which often arrived after you got home. You could telephone, but this meant going to a post office and booking an international call once you mastered the language difficulty.

Next Telecom gave you a call-back card where you spoke to an English speaking operator and costs were charged back home. These days we have email, texting, Skype and mobile phones. All you need is access to the internet or a cellular network.

This may be a cellphone, internet cafe, hotel lobby or kiosk. However this

can be very expensive. Calls on your cellphone cost about \$3 - \$7 per minute, email \$30 per MB, texting 80c per 140 character text. An internet kiosk \$2 for 10 minutes internet.

Look for free internet at libraries and airports. Send a text to let your friends know an email has been sent. Check costs before you go as there have been many horror stories of huge bills. Overseas you pay to receive calls so turn off your cellphone and divert calls to your voicemail. [More here](#).

Avoid using your cellphone for data - just don't!! It is way too expensive.