

How to back up your files with Windows 10 and 11

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Important - if you are using special programs like Quicken or QuickBooks, be sure to go into that program and back it up manually either directly to the flash drive (after your format it), or to some folder that will be included in your backup such as documents.

1. Start at your desktop screen with no programs running.
Insert your flash drive into a USB port.
If any popups come up that you don't understand just close them down or ignore them.
2. Open the File Explorer program and maximize the screen if needed.
It may have opened automatically, or you can click the yellow folder along the bottom of your Desktop.
3. Format the flash drive to erase it. (Warning - any existing files will be deleted)
To do this find your flash drive letter on either side of the File Explorer screen.
Right click the drive, then choose "Format", insure "Quick" is checked, and click the Start button.
Continue when the warning message shows.
4. When done formatting close it down, but stay in the File Explorer.
If the File Explorer closes on its own just open it up again.
5. Find your Documents and Pictures folders along the left side of the File Explorer screen.
Both Win 10 and 11 have a "Quick access" area above "This PC" with folders you can use for back up.
In Win 10 the Quick access folders didn't use to work for backup but this do now.
Also in Win 10 you can click the small arrow in front of "This PC" to see more shortcuts to your folders.
6. Now it's time to backup.
Right click the Documents folder and a menu will show. Find "Send to" in the menu.
If you have Win 11 will likely have to click on "Show more options" to see the "Send to" option.
7. In the "Send to" menu find your flash drive and click on it.
The backup will start and a progress bar may show. Pictures may take a long time to copy.
If you see any prompts asking permission to copy a file, just give it permission and continue.
If you see a message saying there is not enough space, you'll need to buy a larger flash drive.
8. Repeat the steps for other folders like Pictures, Desktop, Music, and Downloads.
9. After everything has finished copying, find your flash drive along the left and click on it.
You may have to click the small arrow to the left of "This PC" to see all the drives.
Look at the contents of the flash drive and make sure your folders and files are copied to it.
10. Close down the File Explorer and get back at your desktop with no programs running.
Wait 15 seconds, then remove your flash drive. You can also use the system tray eject button.