

Backing Up Files on Windows XP

Most people (and I have to admit, I was the same) don't think about backing up their data until after a hard disk crash when it's too late. What would you do if you lost all of your email addresses and all of your photos (including your daughter's wedding)? Installing a backup utility isn't at all difficult and I'll show you the steps below.

You might also want to refer to the companion article on external hard drives.

Windows XP Professional comes with its own backup utility, although XP Home does include it on the installation CD (more on that in a moment). There are also many backup programs around that will allow more flexibility, and even the ability to back up the entire hard drive. Very useful if you need to get your PC up and running quickly after a catastrophic failure.

Installing the Backup utility onto Windows XP Home Edition

1. Insert your Windows XP CD into the drive and, if necessary, double-click the CD icon in My Computer.
2. On the Welcome to Microsoft Windows XP screen, click **Perform Additional Tasks**.
3. Click **Browse this CD**.
4. In Windows Explorer, double-click the ValueAdd folder, then Msft, and then Ntbackup.
5. Double-click **Ntbackup.msi** to install the Backup utility.

Now you are ready to begin backing up. By default, the Backup utility uses a wizard that makes the process straightforward.

1. Click **Start**, then **All Programs**, **Accessories**, **System Tools**, and then click on **Backup** to start the wizard.
2. Click **Next** to skip past the opening page, choose **Back up files and settings** from the second page, and then **Next**. The page that appears should be as in Fig 1.

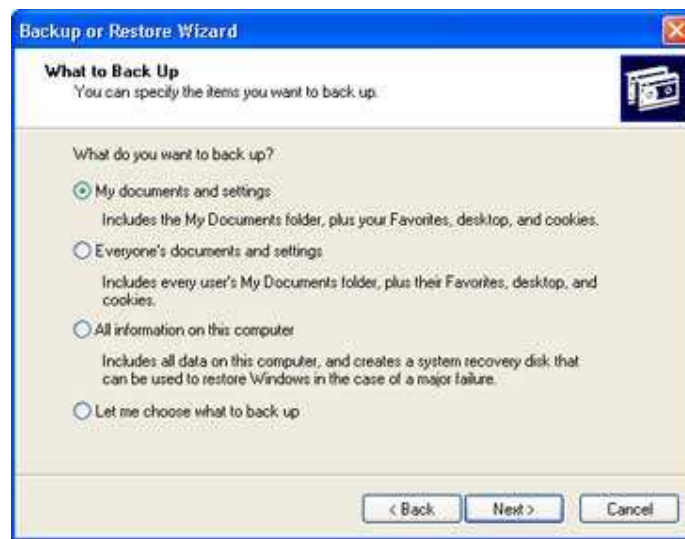


Fig 1

What to Back Up

You can select **All information on this computer** so as to back up everything, but bear in mind that we accumulate many Gigabytes of data over the months and years. Do you really need it all? For most people, the **My documents and settings** option is a better choice. This saves your data files (including e-mail messages and address books) as well as the personal settings in the Windows Registry.

If several people use the same PC; on a family PC for example, choose **Everyone's documents and settings**. This backs up personal files and preferences for every user on the computer.

If you know that you have important files stored elsewhere on the PC choose **Let me choose what to back up**. This takes you to the **Items to Back Up** page shown in Figure 2.

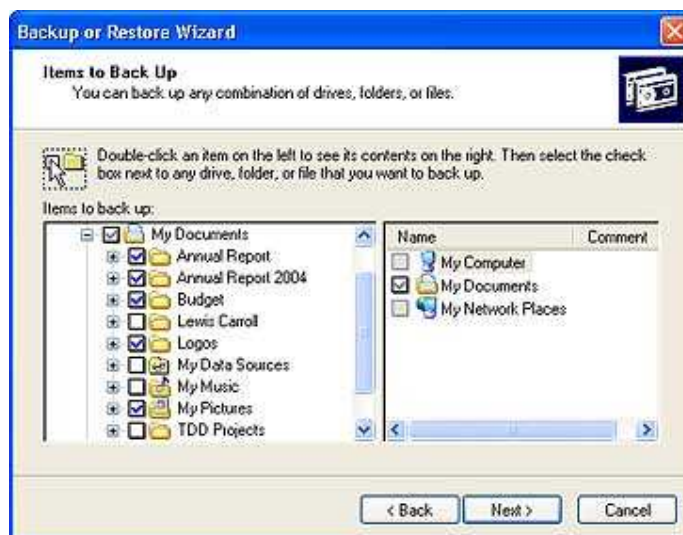


Figure 2

Select the **My Documents** check box to back up all the files in that folder, and then browse the **My Computer** folders to select any additional files you need to back up.

If some of your files are on a shared network drive, open the **My Network Places** folder and select those folders.

Where to Save Your Backup Files

On the **Backup Type, Destination, and Name** page, Windows asks you for a backup location. By default, Backup suggests saving everything to your floppy drive (A: drive). Almost always the floppy drive will be too small for backup purposes, so click **Browse** and choose a location.

The ideal backup location is a separate hard drive from the one you're backing up. This can be an external (usually USB) drive that can be moved from PC to PC (see the companion article on external hard drives), or an additional drive inside your PC. If your computer's single hard disk is partitioned into drive C and drive D then don't be tempted to back up onto drive D: as a disk failure will mean you lose the data on both drives.

Unfortunately, the Windows Backup utility can't save files directly to a CD-RW drive.

After you've chosen a backup location, enter a name for the backup file and click **Next**. This brings up the final page, as shown in Fig 3. Click **Finish** to begin backing up immediately.



Figure 3

Scheduling a Backup for Later

You could repeat these steps every week to perform regular backups. Alternatively though, you might want to set up an automatic schedule so that backup takes place at a more convenient time.

When you get to the final page of the Backup Wizard don't click **Finish**. Instead, click the **Advanced** button, then **Next**. This opens the **When to Back Up** page. Choose **Later**, and then **Set Schedule** to open the **Schedule Job** dialog box shown in Fig 4.

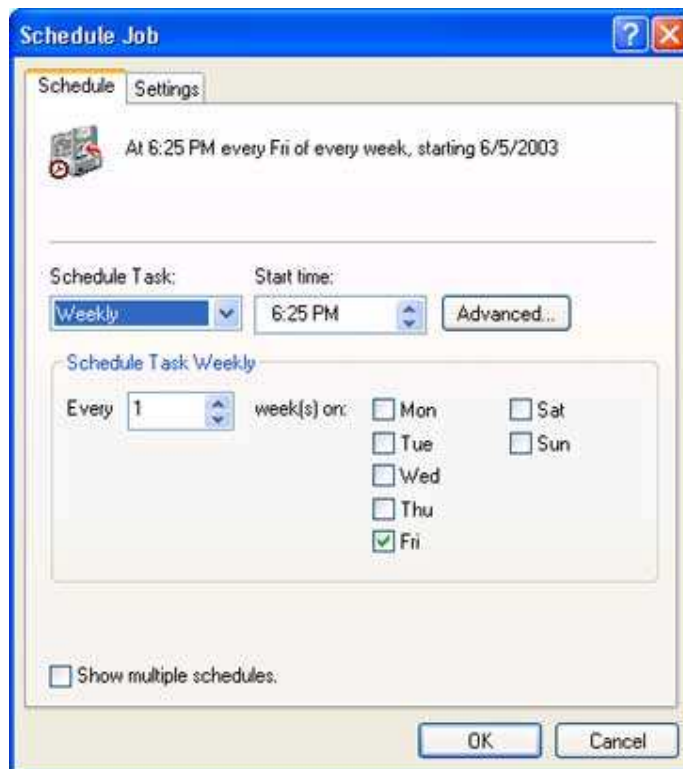


Figure 4

This example shows the settings for a weekly backup on Friday afternoon. Now click **OK** to save your changes, Windows XP runs the backup automatically and you just need to remember to leave your computer switched on for the backup to take place.