

Windows 10 Automatic Backup

If you keep forgetting to backup your computer, Windows 10 can help. All you need is an external storage device (USB Flash Drive, SD Memory Card, or External Hard Drive) and the steps below are all you need to get your files backing up automatically.



1. Find Out How Much Stuff You Have

For the backup to work, your storage device of choice must be big enough to hold at least one copy of all your files, plus room for growth. To find out how much stuff you have, start by pressing and holding the Windows key on your keyboard (Figure 1). While holding it down, press R. You should see the Run dialog box (Figure 2). Type in C:\Users and then press enter on your keyboard or click OK.



Figure 1: Windows Key

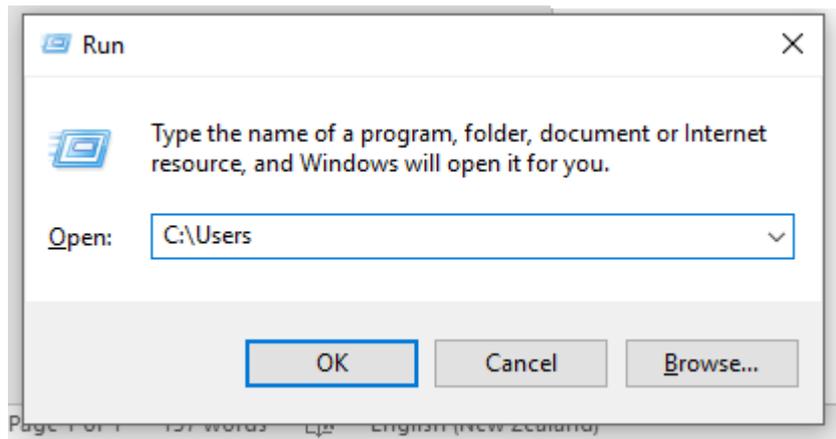


Figure 2: Run Dialog

2. Find Your User Folder

You should see a list of folders, one for each of the user accounts on your computer. For most people, there will be a maximum of three – a default user, public user, and yours.

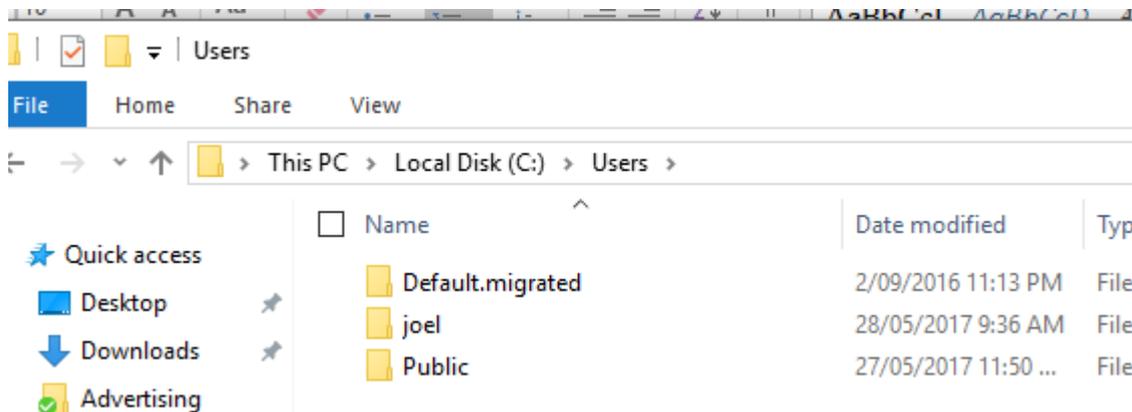


Figure 3: A Typical Users Folder Setup

3. Get the Total Size of Your Files

To do this, right click (ie: click with the right side of your touchpad or right mouse button) on your user folder and select “Properties”. This will bring up a box that tells you how big your files are. Look at the “Size on Disk” value (Figure 4, highlighted by arrow).

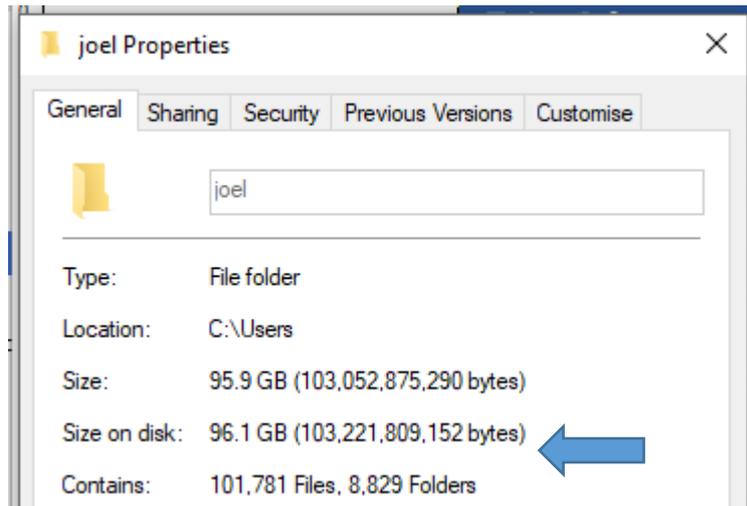


Figure 4: File Properties Box with Size on Disk

4. Pick Your Backup Device

If you already have a USB flash drive, SD memory card or external hard drive that can comfortably hold at least one copy of your files and has room for growth, use that and **jump to step 6**. If not, then you need to pick a device. Your choices are below.

- a. **USB Flash Drive:** Suitable for both laptops and desktops. They are available in sizes up to 256GB, however those bigger than 64GB are quite expensive. If you need more than 80GB of backup space, then an external hard drive is a better choice.
- b. **SD Memory Card:** Suitable for most laptops and all-in-one desktops as most have a built in SD card reader. Some tower desktops do as well. Check your computer and make sure you have one before you purchase. Like USB Flash Drives they are available in sizes up to 256GB, but if you need more than 80GB an external hard drive is probably a better choice.
- c. **External Hard Drives:** These are perfect for large scale backup on all types of computers, but can be less ideal for laptops if you move it around frequently. If you need more than 80GB of backup space they are your only viable choice outside of a cloud backup plan.



5. Pick Your Size

Once you have decided on the device, you need to select a size. If you have 10GB or less of files and do not expect to add many more, then a 16GB USB Flash Drive or SD Memory Card is likely all you will need. If you have 10 – 24GB and you are also not likely to add much, select a 32GB one. And so on. If you have a lot more files or you can foresee yourself adding more, then 64GB is the way to go. If you need or are likely to need more than that, pick up an external hard drive. Unless you plan to have a lot of digital media such as videos and music, it is unlikely you will need more than 1TB in an external hard drive.

6. Plug in Your Device

You should hear a connection noise, and then Windows will ask you what you want to do. Ignore this for now, but **make note of the drive letter** which will be E:, F: or something like that. Knowing the letter is critical.

7. **Find the Settings Page**

Click on the Start Button and click on the Cog icon (Figure 5). Click on the “Update & security” link once the Settings appear (Figure 6).



Figure 5: Start Button and Settings

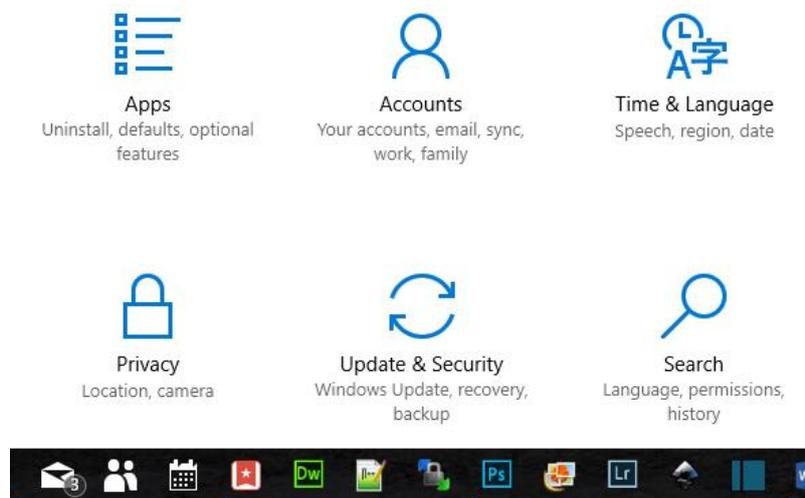


Figure 6: Update and Security Settings

8. **Find the Backup Settings**

Click on “Backup”, then click “Add a drive” (Figure 7). Click on the drive letter you noted in Step 6. Most likely it will be the only one there (Figure 8).

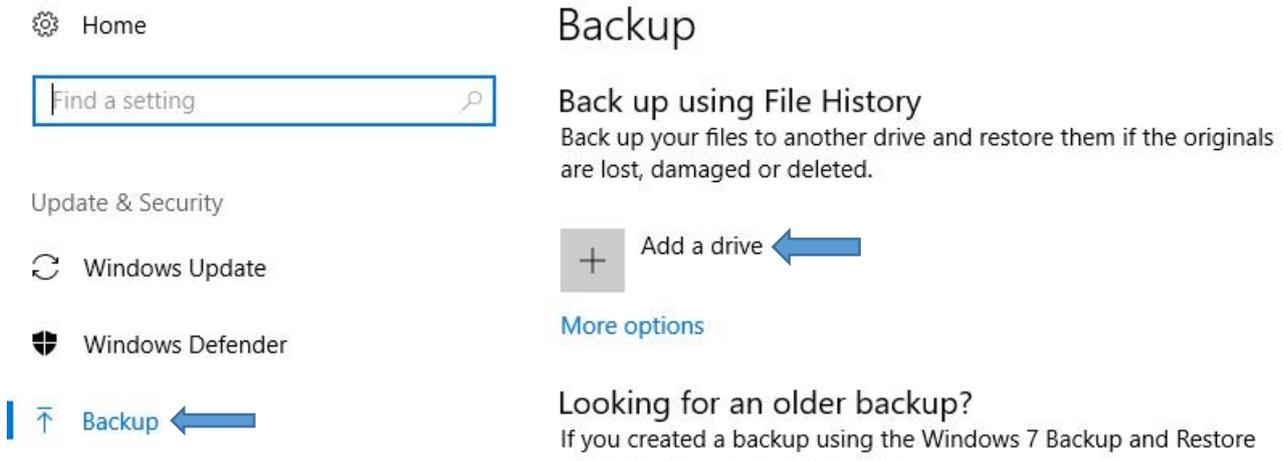


Figure 7: Selecting Backup Settings

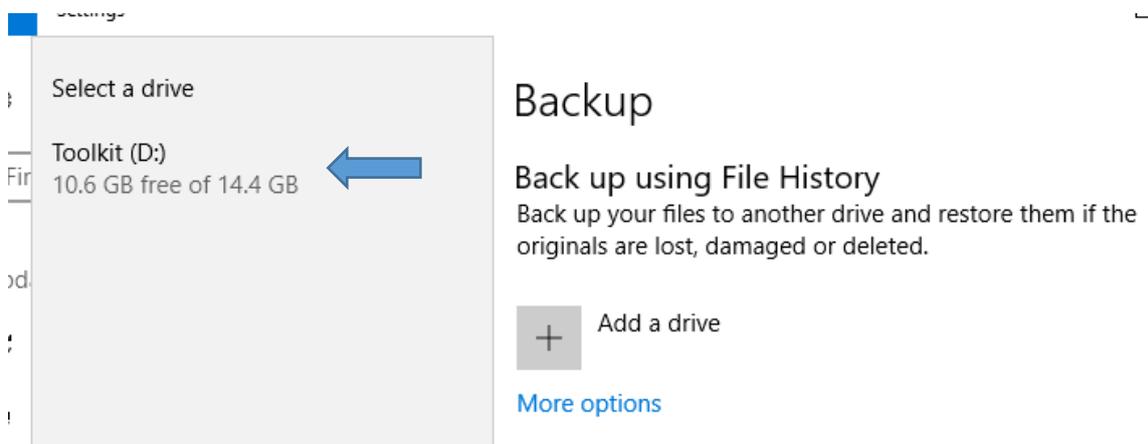


Figure 8: Selecting Your Destination Drive

9. Make sure “Automatically back up my files” is set to “On” (Figure 9). Click the selector if it is not.



Figure 9: Automatic Backup Setting

10. Fine Tune the Settings

Give Windows a moment or two to initialise the device, then click on “More options”. Chose how often you want the backup to occur by clicking on the selector below “Back up my files”. If you are using an external hard drive with a laptop that you move around a lot, daily is probably best. For all other circumstances, chose hourly. Finally, click on the selector below “How Often to Keep Backups” and click on “Until Space is Needed” (Figure 10). Finally, click on “Back up now”.

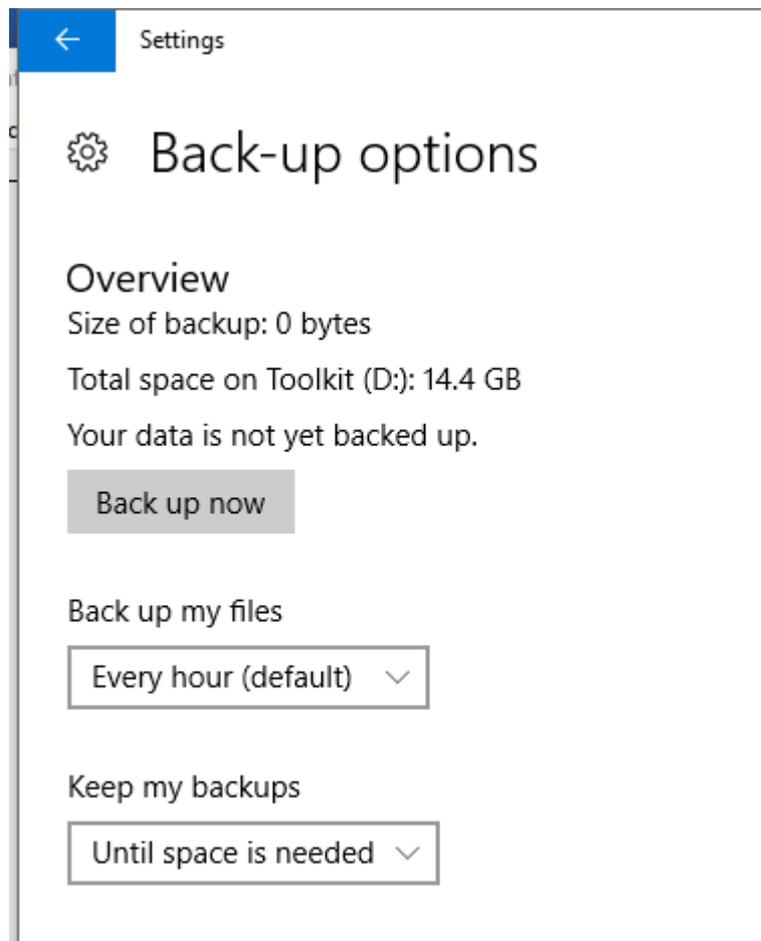


Figure 10: Back Up Options

Windows 10 will now copy across any new files or changed files across to your backup device at the time you selected so long as the backup device is connected. Keep an eye out for error messages relating to backup. Never ignore them. Ask for help if you are not sure what they might mean.

These instructions will help most people backup everything they need to back up. There are a few cases though where the default settings might not help you back up everything. Certain apps store valuable data in unusual locations outside of your users folder. Accounting apps, particularly older ones, commonly do this. Older email programs such as Windows Live Mail and Thunderbird store their files in a hidden folder which requires knowing a few hard to explain tricks to add to the backup folder list. If you are using a web based email service such as Outlook, Gmail or Yahoo then you do not need to worry. All of your email data is stored online. If you are not too sure, ask your favourite local computer technician for help. Backup is something you cannot afford to get wrong.