



Year-End Archival Backups

It's the end of another crazy year. But not everything changes. The calls I get about missing files are nearly always "Can we get an older version of our master list? It's a spreadsheet. We want one from three months ago or maybe last year?"

Three months old is usually easy, if there are timed and managed (inspected) backups running, because the usual schedule is to keep data backups up to around 3 months old. And pulling a single file out of an old backup is routine. Five years? No. Scheduled backups won't have anything that old, and the compressed backup files from a few years back won't always be readable.

With cloud backup, there's at least a 30-day time window to get back every old version of a file. Some clouds have 1-year or 'forever' options, as well, at an additional cost. [Backblaze](#) online backup has a 1-year upgrade option for an extra \$2/month; other backups have long-storage options as well.

Local archival backups are useful for looking up old information, but normal, automated, backups aren't good at that. And then there are legal requirements. Some of you are required to have archived copies of all documents and emails. I have that available through a service company, where needed. For the rest of you, saving an offline copy of your data files at the end of each year is adequate.

How should we do that?

For data sets up to 50 Gb or so, you can burn a set of data files to an optical disk, either DVDs or recordable Blu-Ray, and take them home. This is a good choice if done regularly. Once isn't enough, because sometimes optical disks go bad. (Search Wikipedia for '[disk rot](#).') So if you alternate your file copies to two different brands of disks, maybe quarterly, and take them home, you will have redundant archival copies of your data. If your file set is under 25 Gb, a blu-ray writer drive and single-sided disks are a good choice. There are also double-layer blu-ray recordable disks, holding up to 50Gb.

For data sets that are larger, a USB external hard drive is a good choice. Buy [Toshiba](#) or [Buffalo](#) drives for that, or call me for a recommendation. Again, two drives, alternating, is best, and they should be large enough that you can keep multiple years of data sets so that you have those archival, historical copies of data. Especially those spreadsheets.



Win 10 21H2 is Arriving Now

The last semi-annual Windows 10 feature update began arriving on November 16th. After 21H2, for 2021 second half, Windows 10 feature updates will move to an annual calendar, same as Windows 11. In my opinion, this new feature update is OK, let it install, for most Windows 10 computers, whenever it shows up. It's hasn't been causing problems, and isn't a big update.

There's an exception to that. For computers running an AMD processor in the "A10" or "A9" series, which are mostly from 2017, install the new 21H2 update **right now**. It fixes a major slowdown and overheating problem from the 21H1 version of Windows 10. Call for help on that; I have a quick way of kick-starting the update if it isn't showing up in Windows Update.

The new feature list for 21H2 is here; it's a short list. Mostly, it's the new WPA3 standard for WiFi connection security, and not much else that will be widely used:

[Microsoft Blog: New Features in Windows 10 21H2](#)

And for Windows 11 upgrades, if your hardware supports it, I'm still recommending waiting for Spring on that, for all business computers. For standalone PCs with no industry-specific software, and for gaming computers, Windows 11 is OK to install now if you want it. Create a full system backup first; Windows has an option to remove the Windows 11 update, but that Undo

option self-deletes after only 10 days.



Bitdefender Free will End on December 31st

The days of free antivirus software packages are pretty much gone. Bitdefender (based in Romania) had a good free product for home-only use, but it will shut down at the end of December. Other free products that were very good ten years ago have universally devolved into advertising factories for their paid versions, nagging an advertisement for a paid product every hour, or repeatedly offering a 'free upgrade' that's really a 30-day trial of a paid product, with scary expiration warnings a few weeks later. (This isn't specifically aimed at Bitdefender; it's the industry.) This should be expected now: If you aren't a paying customer, you are the product, and you have to expect to pay for free services by watching ads or sharing personal information.

How about Open Source? Well, that's a great category of free software that is written by volunteers and non-profits, and it works well for many program categories, but for security software, where the malware creators change their software code around three times a day to stay undetectable by security software that can only block code after about two days, it's just too time-sensitive for the free laborers of Open Source.

At this point, I'll only recommend US-based security endpoint software, and there aren't many of them: It's Webroot (Colorado) or Vipre (New York). Call me if you need to add Webroot to a home system.



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Mailing address:
Science Translations
PO Box 1735
Westminster, MD 21158-5735