



Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org.

QUESTION: I've read a lot about backing up my PC but I don't know which strategy is best. Can you make a recommendation?

PC CLUB: There's no "one strategy fits all" solution. If you're a writer with a lot of documents in progress, you probably want to maintain a readily available backup of them including previous revisions. If you have a lot of old photos, you may want to archive them in a safe place for storage. If it's critical that your PC be up and running at all times, you may want a quick disaster recovery solution. It's also possible that you may want to employ all three solutions as I do and it's relatively inexpensive.

Here are a few suggestions. For backing up your data in real time including the ability to go back to previous versions I recommend SugarSync available at www.sugarsync.com. They have a free plan allowing you to back up 5 GB. For archiving a collection of files you can simply copy them to a portable external hard drive and store the drive at an off-site location including a safety deposit box.

An excellent solution for disaster recovery is BounceBack by CMS Products. Various versions are available at www.cmsproducts.com. I recently used their ABSplus V2 Desktop Backup which is available at their web site for \$140. I hooked up the external drive that came with the product, installed the software and created a backup of my entire PC. I subsequently booted from the external drive following the enclosed instructions and my PC was up and running from the external drive. I also had the choice to restore my PC from the external drive. This allows you to be up and running in minutes by booting from the external drive and you can deal with the disaster at your convenience.

Once you backup your entire PC you can choose to also backup your data to the same external drive. You also have the choice to make periodic backups of both the entire PC or the data or both.

Another great feature is that you can purchase an extra hard drive similar to the one used in your PC and mount it in a drive enclosure and create a backup of your entire PC on that drive. Then if your PC crashes, you can remove the drive from the enclosure and replace you PC's hard drive and be back on the air instantly.

Whatever you do, please do something to protect your valuable data and also make sure you have a strategy to recover your PC from disaster.

Ed Schwartz is a member of the North Orange County Computer Club. To send in a question, go to edwardns.com and click the Contact Me menu. Archives of previous columns are also on the website.