

# Why You Should Be Using an Online Backup Service

## Online Backup

Online backup services are relatively new but they are gaining popularity at the speed of light. This is hardly surprising because the advantages they offer are really a lot and it does not require any technical skills in order to use online backup services.

### What is Online Backup?

[Online backup services](#) are a variety of web hosting services where you register with a provider and then you are given space on their server where you can store your data. This is the most basic form of an online backup service but almost always you have additional functionalities you can use, such as the ability to schedule when backups are to be performed and 1-click backup restoration. Many online backup providers offer real-time backup and/or backup of locked files or files in use as well. Generally you pay a small fee (could be in the single digits) per month and it gives you the right to use a couple of gigabytes on their server. Since prices are dropping all the time, it is possible to find offers for 20 or more GB for less than \$10. In any case, the monthly fee you pay for online backup is just a small toll for the peace of mind you get in return because as you will see next, online backup services do have many advantages.

### Why Should I Use Online Backup?

Online backup has many advantages and if you haven't tried yet, you should do it. Online backup requires a fast Internet connection but since nowadays broadband access is becoming the norm, chances are that your connection is fast enough to accommodate all the traffic between the online backup server and your computer. In any case, if your broadband connection is still your bottleneck, you can resort to backing up only the most important 1-2GB of files (rather than your whole 500GB+ hard drive) and still enjoy the numerous benefits of online backups. Here are some good reasons why you should use online backup:

- With [online backup](#) your files are always accessible. File accessibility is one of the unbeatable advantages of online backup. When you store your backups locally (on your hard drive or in a drawer next to your desk), you can't access them remotely. Online backup is another story – you can access your files remotely from any place, where an Internet connection is available.
- Online backup provides protection against hardware/software failures, theft and natural disasters. The second most important advantage of online backups is that your backups are physically safe. When you make a backup and you keep it on the same hard drive, this does not provide any protection because if your hardware and/or software becomes defunct, your backup dies together with your original data.

A step ahead is to keep your backups on CDs, DVDs or tapes instead on your hard drive but in case of theft or natural disasters, this provides no protection at all. There are many stories (for instance the disaster that happened to Mr. Coppola) when thieves or natural disasters deprive you of your backup and you lose the last copy of important documents.

While there is never a 100% guarantee that this will not happen with your online backup, the fact that online backup service providers employ rigorous practices to physically guard your backup (including a backup of the backup), the chance that your backup will be physically destroyed is one in a million.

- Online backup is more reliable than CDs, DVDs, tapes and other traditional backup media. Keeping your backup on CDs, DVDs and tapes is still more than nothing but compared to online backup it is a poor man's choice. Even if you don't get robbed, or hit by a fire, earthquake, hurricane and other natural disasters, CDs and DVDs are very easily destroyed. It is enough to scratch the surface or to drop it on the floor, and a CD/DVD is gone forever, together with your important data.
- Best Practices recommend data vaulting. Online backups are important for individuals but for businesses they can be vital. There are many Best Practices, which strongly recommend to make periodic backups and to store them in a physically protected space. In some cases you might not even have to decide whether your company should use data vaulting (this is the technical term for online or remote backups) because company regulations dictate you to do it.
- Online backup can provide real-time protection. Maybe you are not a bank or another institution for which real-time data protection is a must but in any case, the more recent your latest backup, the better. Many online backup providers offer real-time backup protection at no additional charge, so you should seriously consider using it.

- Online backup is secure. Probably one of the fears many people have in regards to online backup is that their data is exposed to risks when not under their control. Usually such fears have no grounds (unless you choose a really amateurish online backup service provider). On the contrary, online backups are very secure because they include traffic encryption and password protection of the stored file and in many cases secure file sharing (i.e. you can choose whom to share your backups with).
- Online backup is easy to use. Last but not least, comes ease of use. Most online backup services require just basic computer literacy in order to use them. Additionally, compared to onsite backups, there is less hassle when you have to restore the contents of the backup.

#### What to Look For When Choosing an Online Backup Provider?

As you see, online backup does have many advantages. But all these advantages can easily turn into disadvantages, if you choose the wrong provider. While many online backup service providers are professional, still it is possible to choose a bad one if you are not careful enough. Here are some things to consider while choosing an online backup provider:

- Reliability. Reliability is the single most important feature you should look for. If the online backup provider you choose is unreliable, this makes all other fancy features obsolete. All providers claim they are secure but you mustn't believe it. Ask for recommendations from experts or ask your friends, acquaintances or business partners if they can recommend you a reliable provider.
- Security. In addition to reliability, security is also of paramount importance. Check at least if your would-be provider uses encryption and password protection.
- Price. As already mentioned, the prices of online backup services are constantly decreasing, so price becomes less of an issue, especially for corporate users. Choosing the most expensive package is hardly a guarantee for incredible service, so, all equal, choose a cheaper package, unless it is ridiculously cheap and you suspect this service is not reliable.
- Storage space. If you want to backup only some of your files, then you don't need many gigabytes of storage space. Still, the more GBs of space your online backup provider offers, the better.
- Backup frequency. For corporate users it is a must that backups are performed real-time, or at least once a day but even for personal users it does matter how often backups are performed. Again, the smaller the interval, the better. You can also ask if incremental backups are possible because if incremental backups are possible, you must backup only the files that have been changed since the last backup instead of all the files. This saves time and effort, though sometimes it is riskier than a full backup.
- Free trials. Check if your would-be provider offers free trials. A free trial can give you a real-life impression of what the service is like and if it is easy to use.

#### About the Author

Jason Kay is a regular contributor to internet related websites such as [Remote Online Backup](#), which provides customer reviews and ratings of [online backup](#) services.

Source: <http://www.thewritemarket.com>