**1. What happens if you skip differential backups?**

If you don’t use differential backups, your backup strategy will still work — it’s not going to break anything. But:

* Your full backups might take longer and use more space since you're doing them more often.
* If you ever need to restore, it could take more time because you'd have to restore the full backup **plus** a bunch of transaction log backups instead of just one differential.

**Bottom line**: Differential backups aren’t required, but they make life easier by saving time and space.

**2. What’s the difference between restoring a full backup vs. a copy-only backup?**

They both contain the full database, but here’s the key difference:

* A **full backup** is part of your regular backup schedule. It becomes the base for things like differential and log backups.
* A **copy-only backup** is just a one-off. It won’t mess with your regular backup chain or affect your future differential or log backups.

**Use a full backup** when you're doing regular backups.  
**Use a copy-only backup** when you just want a quick safety copy — like before a big change — without messing anything up.

**3. What happens if you use WITH RECOVERY in the middle of a restore?**

That’s basically telling SQL Server, “I'm done restoring — bring the database online.”

If you do that too soon, you **can’t restore anything else after that** (like more transaction log backups).

So if you’re restoring multiple backups (like full + log files), don’t use WITH RECOVERY until the **very last one**.

**4. Which backup types are required, and which are optional for full recovery?**

Here’s the simple version:

✅ **Required for full recovery (to avoid losing data):**

* **Full backups** – always needed.
* **Transaction log backups** – needed to recover to a specific point in time.

❌ **Optional but helpful:**

* **Differential backups** – faster and smaller than full backups, but not required.
* **Copy-only backups** – great for special situations, won’t mess up your backup routine.
* **File/filegroup backups** – only needed for really large databases or special cases.