My Information Just Under Glass

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Computer Backup Checklist

📋 Complete Computer Backup Checklist

> **What This Is:** *A step-by-step guide developed at www.mijug.net to safely back up your computer before making any changes. Perfect for older users or anyone who wants to be extra careful.*

🎯 Why Use This Checklist?

Before you:

- Install Linux or try a new operating system
- Make major computer changes
- Give your computer to someone for repair
- Upgrade your hard drive
- Try Windows Subsystem for Linux (WSL)

This checklist helps you:

- ✅ Find all your important files
- ✅ Know what programs you use
- ✅ Create proper backups
- ✅ Feel confident about changes

📥 DOWNLOAD: Printable Backup Inventory Sheet

🖨️ **Download PDF Checklist** *(Print this and fill it out by hand)*

🔍 Phase 1: Computer Detective Work

📊 Step 1: Find Out What You Have

1.1 Check Your Windows Version

- Press **Win + R**, type `winver`, press Enter
- Write down:
  - 🖊️ Windows version: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Build number: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Your computer name: **_____**

1.2 Check Your Storage Space

- Open **File Explorer** (folder icon in taskbar)
- Click **"This PC"** on the left
- Look at your **C: drive**
- Write down:
  - 🖊️ Total space: _____ GB
  - 🖊️ Used space: _____ GB
  - 🖊️ Free space: _____ GB

1.3 Check Your Memory (RAM)

- Right-click **"This PC"** → **"Properties"**
- Write down:
  - 🖊️ Installed memory (RAM): _____ GB
  - 🖊️ Processor: **_____**

👤 Step 2: User Account Information

2.1 Find All User Accounts

- Open **Settings** (gear icon)
- Click **"Accounts"** → **"Family & other users"**
- Write down each user:
  - 🖊️ User 1: **_____** (Admin/Standard)
  - 🖊️ User 2: **_____** (Admin/Standard)
  - 🖊️ User 3: **_____** (Admin/Standard)

2.2 Check Your Account Type

- In Settings → Accounts → **"Your info"**
- Write down:
  - 🖊️ Your username: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Account type: ☐ Administrator ☐ Standard User
  - 🖊️ Microsoft account email (if connected): **_____**

🔌 Step 3: Hardware Inventory

3.1 Check USB Ports Count and identify your USB ports:

- 🖊️ USB 2.0 ports (black): _____ front, _____ back

- 🖊️ USB 3.0+ ports (blue/red/teal): _____ front, _____ back
- 🖊️ USB-C ports: _____ total

3.2 Check Connected Devices List what's currently plugged in:

- 🖊️ External hard drives: **_____**
- 🖊️ USB sticks: **_____**
- 🖊️ Printer: **_____**
- 🖊️ Other devices: **_____**

📁 Phase 2: File Location Detective Work

🏠 Step 4: Find Your Personal Files

4.1 Documents Folder Check

- Open **File Explorer → Documents**
- Count approximate number of files: 🖊️ _____
- Estimate size: 🖊️ _____ GB
- **Important subfolders:**
  - 🖊️ Work files location: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Tax documents: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Important papers: **_____**

4.2 Pictures Folder Check

- Open **File Explorer → Pictures**
- Count approximate number of photos: 🖊️ _____
- Estimate size: 🖊️ _____ GB
- **Important photo folders:**
  - 🖊️ Family photos: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Vacation photos: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Screenshots: **_____**

4.3 Music and Videos Check

- Check **Music** folder: 🖊️ _____ GB
- Check **Videos** folder: 🖊️ _____ GB
- Check **Downloads** folder: 🖊️ _____ GB

4.4 Desktop Files

- Count files on desktop: 🖊️ _____
- **Important desktop items:**
  - 🖊️ Important shortcuts: **_____**
  - 🖊️ Files that must be saved: **_____**

📧 Step 5: Email and Cloud Storage

5.1 Email Programs Check which email programs you use:

- ☐ Outlook (Microsoft)
- ☐ Thunderbird
- ☐ Windows Mail app
- ☐ Web-based only (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.)

If using Outlook or Thunderbird:

- 🖊 Email file location: **_____**
- 🖊 Estimated size: _____ GB

5.2 Cloud Storage Check which cloud services you use:

- ☐ OneDrive (Microsoft) - Folder location: **_____**
- ☐ Google Drive - Folder location: **_____**
- ☐ Dropbox - Folder location: **_____**
- ☐ iCloud - Folder location: **_____**
- ☐ Other: **_____**

For each cloud service:

- 🖊 Sync status: ☐ Fully synced ☐ Needs syncing
- 🖊 Local folder size: _____ GB

📦 Phase 3: Software and Programs Inventory

💻 Step 6: Essential Programs List

6.1 Check Installed Programs

- Open **Settings → Apps → Apps & features**
- Write down your most important programs:

Essential Programs (you can't live without):

- 🖊 1. **_____** (Version: _____)
- 🖊 2. **_____** (Version: _____)
- 🖊 3. **_____** (Version: _____)
- 🖊 4. **_____** (Version: _____)
- 🖊 5. **_____** (Version: _____)

6.2 Check for License Keys For paid software, find your license information:

- 🖊 Microsoft Office: **_____**
- 🖊 Adobe products: **_____**

- ✏️ Antivirus software: **_____**
- ✏️ Other paid software: **_____**

6.3 Browser Information

- ✏️ Main browser: ☐ Chrome ☐ Firefox ☐ Edge ☐ Other: _____
- ✏️ Bookmarks location: Check if synced to account
- ✏️ Important bookmarks: **_____**

🔑 Step 7: Password and Account Information

7.1 Password Manager Check

- ☐ Using password manager: **_____**
- ☐ Master password written down safely: ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ☐ Password manager synced to phone: ☐ Yes ☐ No

7.2 Important Account List Banking and Financial:

- ✏️ Bank 1: **_____** (Username: _____)
- ✏️ Bank 2: **_____** (Username: _____)
- ✏️ Credit cards: **_____**
- ✏️ Investment accounts: **_____**

Email and Communication:

- ✏️ Primary email: **_____**
- ✏️ Backup email: **_____**
- ✏️ Social media accounts: **_____**

Work and Professional:

- ✏️ Work email: **_____**
- ✏️ Professional accounts: **_____**

💾 Phase 4: Backup Storage Planning

📏 Step 8: Calculate Backup Storage Needs

8.1 Add Up Your Data

- Documents: _____ GB
- Pictures: _____ GB
- Music: _____ GB
- Videos: _____ GB
- Email: _____ GB
- Desktop: _____ GB
- Cloud folders: _____ GB
- **Total needed:** _____ GB

8.2 Choose Backup Storage Based on your total, you need:

Your Total Data	Recommended USB Drive	Alternative Option
Under 16GB	32GB USB stick (FAT32)	64GB for future growth
16GB - 64GB	128GB USB drive (exFAT)	External hard drive
64GB - 500GB	1TB external hard drive (NTFS)	Cloud backup + USB
Over 500GB	2TB external hard drive (NTFS)	Multiple drives or cloud

Your choice: 🖊 **_____**

💿 Step 9: USB Drive Format Planning

9.1 Choose USB Format Based on Use Refer to our filesystem guide for details:
- ☐ **FAT32** - If sharing with very old computers
- ☐ **exFAT** - If sharing between Windows and Mac (recommended)
- ☐ **NTFS** - If using only with Windows computers

9.2 Test Your USB Drive Before backing up:
- 🖊 USB drive size: _____ GB
- 🖊 USB drive format: **_____**
- 🖊 USB port type used: ☐ USB 2.0 ☐ USB 3.0+
- 🖊 Test copy speed: ☐ Fast ☐ Slow ☐ Very slow

✅ Phase 5: Pre-Backup Verification

🔍 Step 10: Final Safety Checks

10.1 Verify Important Files
- ☐ Can open Documents folder without errors
- ☐ Can open Pictures folder without errors
- ☐ Can open email program (if applicable)
- ☐ All cloud folders are synced
- ☐ No "file in use" or "permission denied" errors

10.2 System Health Check

- ☐ Computer boots normally
- ☐ No error messages on startup
- ☐ Antivirus scan completed recently
- ☐ Windows updates installed
- ☐ No strange noises from hard drive

10.3 Backup Equipment Ready

- ☐ USB drive tested and working
- ☐ USB drive has enough space (at least 25% more than your data)
- ☐ Power adapter connected (for laptop backups)
- ☐ Backup will not be interrupted

🚨 Phase 6: Create Emergency Contact List

📞 Step 11: Help Resources

If something goes wrong, contact:

Technical Support:

- 🖊️ Computer manufacturer: **_____**
- 🖊️ Local computer repair: **_____**
- 🖊️ Tech-savvy family/friend: **_____**

Important Service Numbers:

- 🖊️ Internet provider: **_____**
- 🖊️ Microsoft Support: 1-800-MICROSOFT
- 🖊️ Password manager support: **_____**

Recovery Information:

- 🖊️ Windows product key location: **_____**
- 🖊️ Router/WiFi password location: **_____**
- 🖊️ Emergency contact who has backup info: **_____**

📝 Phase 7: Backup Execution Plan

🎯 Step 12: Backup Strategy Selection

Choose your backup method:

Option A: Simple File Copy (Recommended for most people)

- ☐ Copy Documents folder to USB
- ☐ Copy Pictures folder to USB

- ☐ Copy Desktop folder to USB
- ☐ Copy Downloads folder to USB
- ☐ Export browser bookmarks
- ☐ Test that files can be opened from USB

Option B: Windows Backup Tool

- ☐ Use Control Panel → Backup and Restore
- ☐ Create system image backup
- ☐ Create file backup
- ☐ Test restore process

Option C: Cloud + Local Backup

- ☐ Ensure all files synced to cloud
- ☐ Create local copy on USB as backup
- ☐ Verify cloud account access

Your chosen method: 🖊 **_____**

⏰ Step 13: Time Planning

Estimate backup time based on data size:

- Under 10GB: 30 minutes - 1 hour
- 10-50GB: 1-3 hours
- 50-200GB: 3-8 hours
- Over 200GB: Plan for overnight

Your estimated time: 🖊 _____
Best time to start backup: 🖊 _____

🏁 Phase 8: Final Checklist Before Changes

✅ Step 14: Ready to Proceed Verification

Before making ANY system changes, verify:

Backup Complete:

- ☐ All important files copied and tested
- ☐ Backup stored in safe location
- ☐ Backup accessible from another computer
- ☐ Program list and license keys saved
- ☐ Account information secured

System Ready:

- ☐ Computer running normally
- ☐ No pending Windows updates

- ☐ No running programs that could interfere
- ☐ Power adapter connected (laptops)
- ☐ Enough free disk space for changes

Support Ready:

- ☐ This checklist printed and available
- ☐ Contact information for help ready
- ☐ Time set aside for the process
- ☐ Alternative computer available if needed

Knowledge Ready:

- ☐ Read relevant guides (WSL, Linux variants, filesystems)
- ☐ Understand what changes you're making
- ☐ Know how to undo changes if needed

🆘 Emergency Recovery Information

🔄 If Something Goes Wrong

Step 1: Don't Panic

- Most problems can be fixed
- Your backup should have all important files
- Help is available

Step 2: Basic Recovery

- Restart computer
- Try "Last Known Good Configuration" (F8 during startup)
- Use Windows System Restore
- Boot from Windows installation media

Step 3: File Recovery

- Boot from USB with Linux Live environment
- Access files even if Windows won't start
- Copy files to external drive
- Use backup files created with this checklist

Step 4: Get Help

- Contact technical support with your completed checklist
- Bring backup drive and this documentation
- Explain what you were trying to do when problems started

📋 **Checklist Summary:** This comprehensive backup checklist ensures you're prepared for any computer changes. Print it out, fill it in completely, and keep it with your backup drive. When in doubt, always backup first, ask questions later!

🔗 **Related Guides:**

- [Password Management](#)
- [Linux Decision Guide](#)
- [Filesystem Formats](#)
- [WSL Installation](#)
- [WSL Disk Management](#)

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