

REDUCING YOUR DIGITAL DEPENDENCY ON GOOGLE SERVICES

A Selective Backup Strategy Blueprint



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INTRODUCTION

Google is *not* a verb.

It is a company.

When we turn corporations into verbs, we grant them something they did not earn: permanence. We treat them like infrastructure. Like oxygen. Like inevitability.

They are not.

They are businesses.

Businesses can:

- Change policies.
- Sunset products.
- Lock accounts.
- Reinterpret enforcement.
- Offer no meaningful appeal.

And they can do all of it while you have done nothing wrong.

After 15+ years of using **Google Voice** – without violating any published policies – I experienced a sudden disruption. No clear violation. No real explanation.

Just a reminder: access is conditional.

That was the moment I wanted to surgically remove Google from my life.

Not dramatically. Surgically.

But here's the second realization:

You cannot undo 15 years of dependency in 48 hours.

I didn't just use Google.

- I built workflows around it.
- Passwords were stored there.
- Accounts were tied to it.
- Identity verification depended on it.
- Photos. Contacts. Search history. Email. Messages.

Google wasn't just a tool.

It had become *connective tissue*.

That is the real risk.

This could happen to you – even if you follow every rule.

Not because Google is uniquely evil.

- Facebook can do it.
- Apple can do it.
- Amazon can do it.

Any centralized platform with deep integration creates gravity.

Dependency is the *vulnerability*.

Removing Dependency Is Not a Weekend Project

This is not about deleting your account tomorrow.

It's about **building exit capacity**.

Service by service.

Starting with what you will miss the least.

Working toward what you believe you “can’t live without.”

- Inventory.
- Export.
- Reconstruct.
- Replace.
- Repeat.

Google Takeout is not freedom.

It is *raw material*.

An archive sitting in folders is *not independence*.

It is *potential*.

We need tools that:

- Turn exports into living, searchable archives.
- Reconstruct communication histories locally.
- Visualize relationships outside platform dashboards.
- Mirror data without requiring continued loyalty.

Export is *extraction*.

Reconstruction is *liberation*.

This Is a Roadmap, Not a Purity Test

You do not have to leave everything.

You may never leave everything.

But you should know that you can.

And you should build your life in a way that does not collapse if access changes tomorrow.

That is what removing dependency means.

The Cultural Correction

Stop saying “*Google it.*”

✗ Google is not the internet.

✗ It is not knowledge.

✗ It is not truth.

✗ It is not infrastructure.

It is a company.

And companies do not get to be the foundation of your life without scrutiny.

GOOGLE TAKEOUT

You can export all the data in your entire Google account across all services by visiting <https://takeout.google.com/>

← Google Takeout

CREATE A NEW EXPORT

1

Select data to include

78 of 80 selected

Products

Deselect all

If you've been using the account **heavily over many years**, the **size of the export** is going to be **very large**.

As an example, my account is about **twenty years old** and the total size of my download was **over 400 gigs**.

My Gmail inbox alone was over 4 gigs.

The screenshot shows the Google Takeout interface. At the top, there's a back arrow and the title "Google Takeout". Below that, a section titled "Select data to include" shows "1 of 80 selected".
Mail: This section includes a "Mail" icon, a description of "Messages and attachments in your Gmail account in MBOX format. User settings from your Gmail account in JSON format.", a "More info" link, and a checked checkbox. Below this are two buttons: "Multiple formats" and "All Mail data included".
Maps: This section includes a "Maps" icon, a description of "Your preferences and personal places in Maps", and an unchecked checkbox. Below this are two buttons: "Multiple formats" and "All Maps data included".

If you have ample **external storage**, this is fine.

If you do not, it will be an issue.

I personally have a desktop and laptop, but hard drive space is not something I give up easily and 400 gigs is more space than I'm willing to just hand over blindly.

TOTAL ACCOUNT > IMPORTANT FILES

 **Reality check:** even if your account data **export** is huge, a **large percentage** of it is *stuff you don't actually care about losing.*

If you're a digital hoarder, you're going to have to trust my confidence here.

If you were to **scan your documents in Google Docs**, for example, quickly **evaluate the value** of each by asking yourself:

“Does this contain something I’d actually be sad about losing forever?”

 If the answer is **YES**, the document **gets added** to a special **new backup folder**.

 If the answer is **NOT REALLY**, the document doesn’t get moved to the new folder.

You can leave it in your Google Drive, but otherwise leave it alone.

This same process can be repeated across other Google services that you use to store your files in.

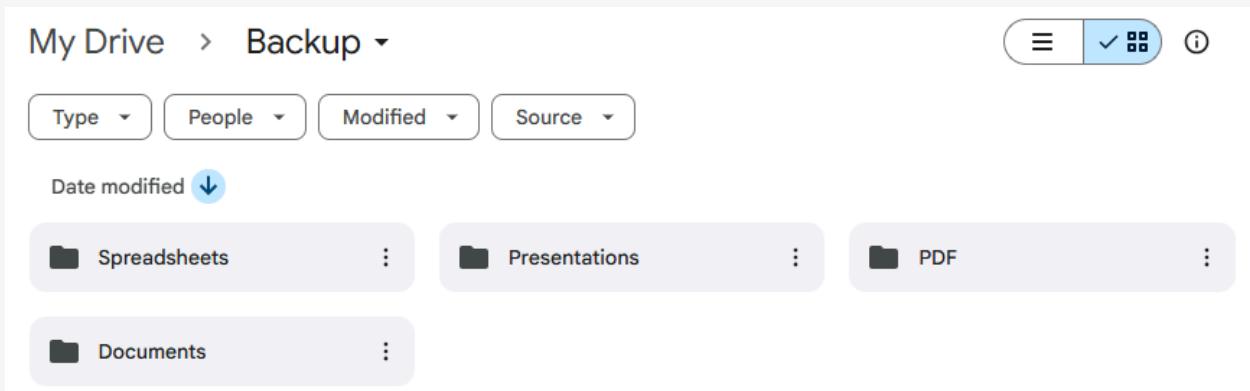
QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Will I ever actually need this again?
- Does this contain important or essential information I don't have stored anywhere else?
- Are there duplicates of this file?
- Am I 100% sure what the content of this file is without opening it?
- How long has it been since I've used or opened this file?
- Have I deleted all .ZIP folders that I've already extracted?

GOOGLE DRIVE

📁 Easy process for a **selective backup strategy** that saves **only what actually matters** to you in your **Google Drive**.

1. **Go to Google Drive:** <https://drive.google.com/> (using a desktop or laptop if possible)
2. On the left side of the screen, click on **New → New Folder**. Name it **Backup**.
3. Inside your new backup folder, create **a few broad sub-folders**. Examples might include folders such as: *Documents, PDFs, Spreadsheets, Images, Audio, Video, Presentations*.



4. In the **search bar** at the top of the page, click on the **icon on the far right**.



5. In the advanced search options, **filter by Type** and for **Owner**, choose **Owned by me**.

The screenshot shows the Google Drive interface. At the top, there is a search bar labeled "Search in Drive" and a filter icon. Below the search bar, the title "My Drive" is displayed with a dropdown arrow. Underneath, there are four filter buttons: "Type", "People", "Modified", and "Source". A sorting option "Date modified" is shown with a blue downward arrow. The main area displays a grid of file and folder thumbnails. The visible items include:

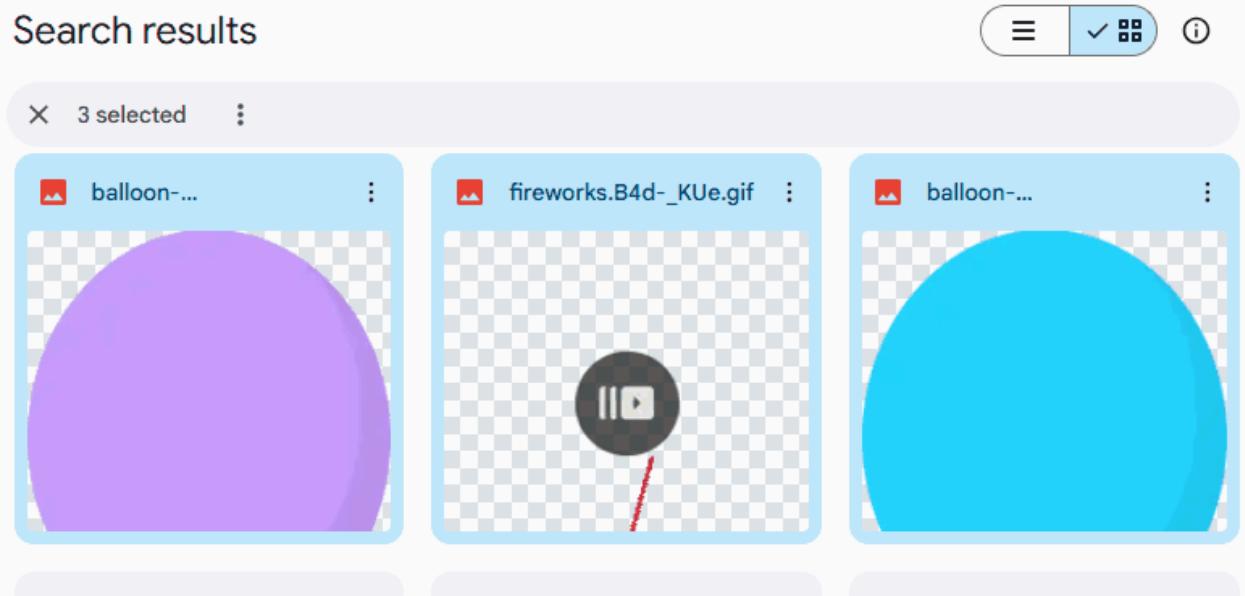
- Important Documents
- Simple Flowchart
- Simple Relationship
- Opal
- Sound-Effects
- Attachments
- Tag-Cloud-Studio
- Chat-Categories
- Untitled form (File..)
- Chipmunkify
- appsheet
- Escort Profile & Ad

6. Scroll the results and **select the files that actually matter**. Use **Control + Click** to **select multiple files**.

7. Once all the files are selected, click the **three dots menu** at the top of the search results.

The screenshot shows the Google Drive search results with a red arrow pointing to the three dots menu icon located at the bottom left of the search results header. The header also includes a close button ("X"), the text "3 selected", and a refresh icon.

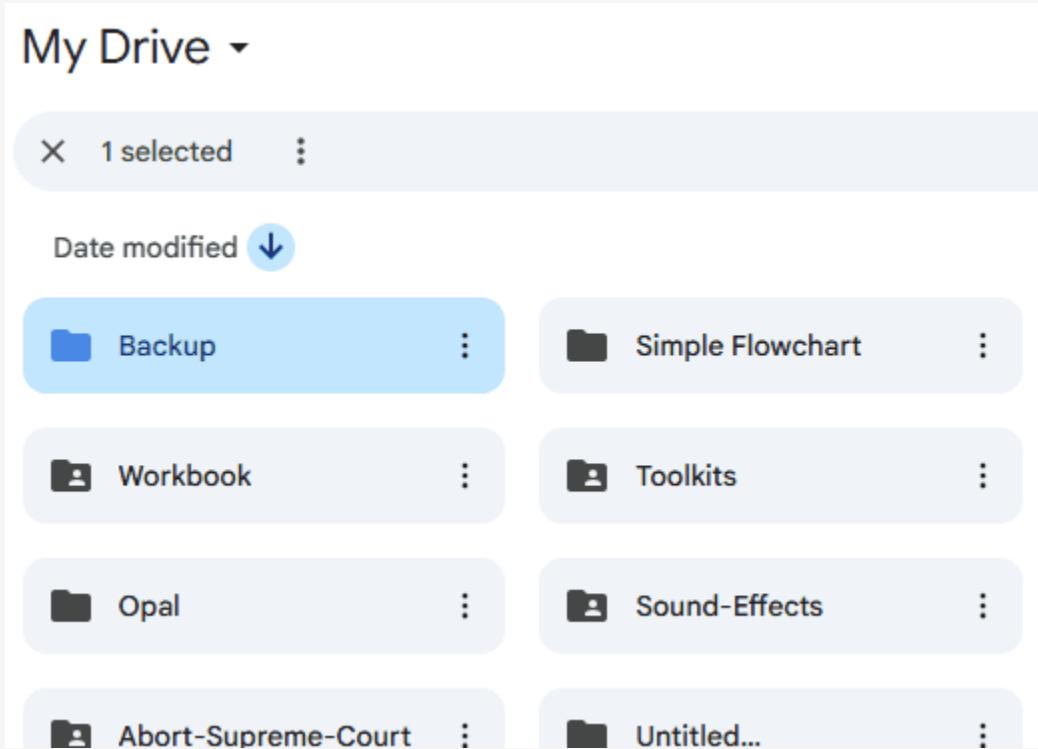
8. From the three dots menu, scroll down to **Organize → Move**.



9. In the popup window, navigate to the **correct folder** within the **Backup folder** and **click move**.

10. Continue using these steps to move all essential and important files into their appropriate folders in Backup.

11. Once finished, click the **three dots menu** next to your **Backup folder** in Drive.



GOOGLE PHOTOS

📁 Google Photos is a **gigantic chunk** of your entire Google Account export, if you **automatically backup your photos** there. Organizing your photos into **Albums** by *location, type or another meaningful category* will make **backing up the ones that matter** much simpler and **reduce the size of your archive** considerably.

1. Go to Google Photos: <https://photos.google.com/> (on a desktop or laptop)
2. If you already have your photos organized into **Albums**, you've already done all the legwork here. Just **check to be sure** that **your most recent photos** have been **added to the correct albums** and you're set!
3. If you don't already have Albums, **create a few broadly named ones** now.
4. The big task here is to **scroll through all your photos** and begin **selecting them** and **adding them** to an appropriately named **Album**.



5. Repeat this process until all the ones you care about most have been added to an Album.

6. Open one of the albums that you want to save.
7. In the **upper right hand corner** of the screen, **click the three dots menu** and choose **Download All**. This will download a **ZIP folder** containing all the photos in that album.
8. Repeat for all Albums you consider essential.

GMAIL LABELS & FILTERS

 Gmail labels and filters can help *dramatically reduce* the size of your inbox export in **Google Takeout**. Ideally, you would already have these in place and be using them as you go. However, we can create them now if you don't have them and setup some filters to help **automate the process** of sorting your emails into the correct labels.

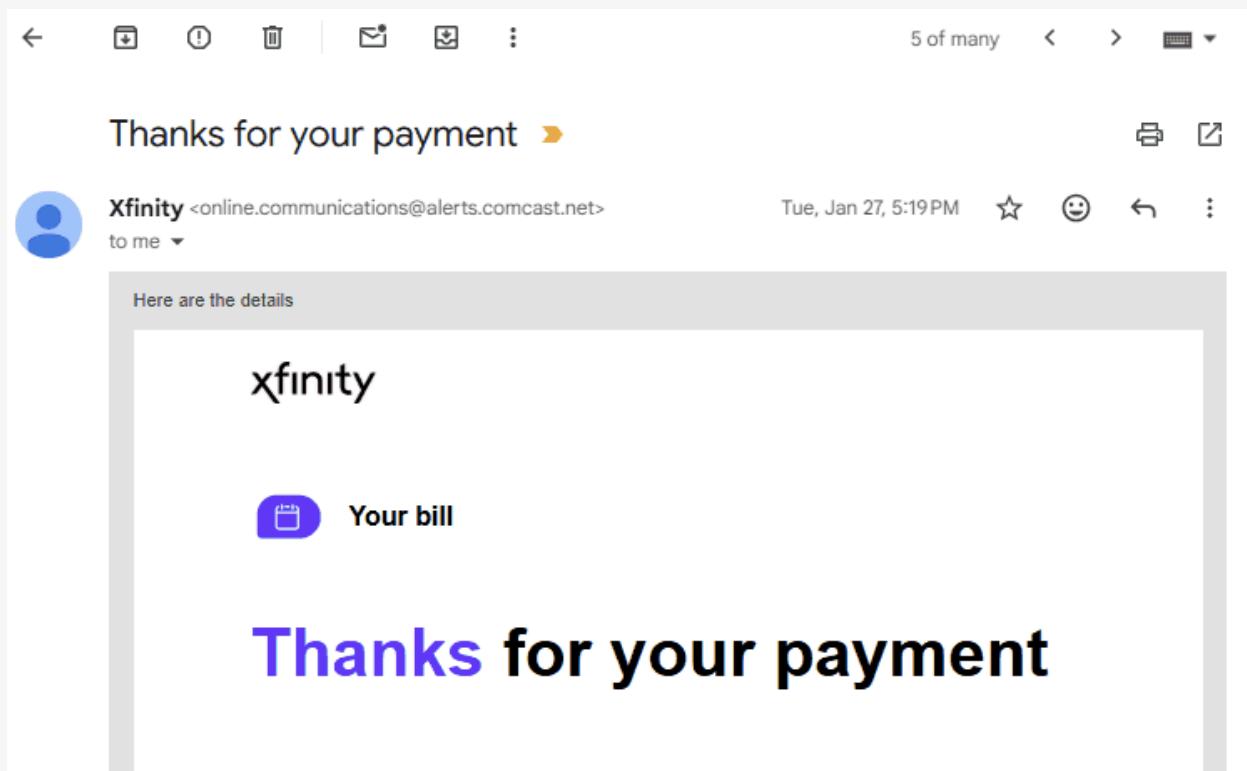
1. Go to Gmail: <https://mail.google.com/> (on a desktop or laptop)
2. In the **left sidebar**, you will see **Labels** with a plus sign (+) next to it.
3. Clicking the **Add (+)** will trigger a popup asking you to **enter the Name** for your new **Label**.
4. If this label is a **sub-label** to an existing one, check the box to **nest it under the parent label**. Example: **Accounts → Payments**.
5. At this point in the process, we need to spend some time thinking about the emails that should ultimately end up with this label applied to them. There are a few ways to assess this, including: **common from addresses, repeated subject lines, keywords**, etc.
6. Using our earlier example of **Accounts → Payments**, let's say that you want to add all of the **automated emails** you receive that **contain receipts for payments made to your internet provider**.

7. The first step is **searching in Gmail** for something **all of those are likely to contain**.

If your **ISP** is **Comcast/xfinity**, you could try searching for one of those.

8. Scan the search results and take a mental note of the *different types* of automated emails xfinity sends you (there will be several). In my case, most of them were *bill statements, receipts, promotional offers or account notifications*.

9. Open one that is a receipt for a payment. At the top of the email **on the far right** side, there will be a **three dot menu**. Click it and scroll down to **Filter messages like this**.



10. In the popup that appears, the **from address** should automatically be filled out for you. **Copy the exact text of the subject line and paste it into the text field** for that. Hit search and see all of your receipts from xfinity in the search results.

11. Once you've filtered the search to the **specific subject line** and **sender** you want, click the **advanced search icon** in the Gmail search bar at the top of the screen (it should still have the selections you made).

The screenshot shows the Gmail search interface with various filters applied:

- From: bonline.communications@alerts.comcast.net
- To: (empty)
- Subject: Thanks for your payment
- Has the words: (empty)
- Doesn't have: (empty)
- Size: greater than [dropdown] MB [dropdown]
- Has attachment

At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "Create filter" (with a red arrow pointing to it) and "Search".

12. This time in the popup, click on **Create Filter**. In the next screen, **check the box** next to **Apply the label**, then **select Receipts** from the **dropdown**. At the bottom of the screen, **check the box** next to **Also apply filter to [number of emails] matching conversations**. Finally, click the **Create Filter** button.

The screenshot shows the 'Create filter' dialog box. At the top left is a back arrow icon. To its right is the text 'When a message is an exact match for your search criteria:'. Below this is a list of actions with checkboxes:

- Skip the Inbox (Archive it)
- Mark as read
- Star it
- Apply the label: Choose label... ▾
- Forward it to: Choose an address... ▾ [Add forwarding address](#)
- Delete it
- Never send it to Spam
- Send template: Choose template... ▾
- Always mark it as important
- Never mark it as important
- Categorize as: Choose category... ▾
- Also apply filter to 43 matching conversations.

At the bottom left is a 'Learn more' link with a question mark icon. On the far right is a blue 'Create filter' button.

THIRD-PARTY APPS & SERVICES

 Check to see which **third-party apps** and **services** you log into with your **Google Account**. Don't freak out if the number is high, many of them will be **games** you no longer play or **sites you used once** and never logged into again.

We know why we use **Login With Google**; it's *convenient*.

Lesser-known companies know this and that's exactly why they offer the option.

There is a lot **less friction** in getting new users to sign up for your app if they don't have to go through the process of creating a username/email and password.

Most people today have **password fatigue** anyways. I know I certainly do.

But **what happens if Google bans you** from a service, or even at the account level?

You might think that won't happen. I *used to*.

But it's very real. You don't even have to break any of the rules in some cases.

Bottom line: Google decides if you can continue to use their services.

Ultimately, you do not control your access to the account.

If this happens and you login to tons of other sites using your Google Account, guess what the domino effect is?

You lose access to all of those accounts too.

- 1. Check third-party apps and services here:**

<https://myaccount.google.com/connections> (be sure you're logged into your account first).

The screenshot shows the 'Third-party apps & services' section of the Google My Account. At the top, it displays '117 total apps & services'. Below this, there is a search bar labeled 'Search by name'. A 'Filter by' button is followed by three buttons: 'Sign in with Google (103)', 'Access to (32) ▾', and 'Linked account (0)'. The main list contains three items: 'Ad Data and Analytics by Windsor.ai' (with a Windsor.ai logo), 'ApiFlash' (with a lightning bolt icon), and 'APILayer' (with a blue square icon). Each item has a right-pointing arrow to its right.

- 2. Scroll the list and scan it for apps and services that actually matter to you. Ignore the rest.**
- 3. Repeat the scan to be sure you didn't miss anything essential on your first run.**
- 4. Make a list of the services you rely on and care about.**

RECOGNIZING IMPORTANT APPS:

- Financial sites, banking, seller platforms, marketplaces, payment processors, affiliate networks, etc
- Legal services, medical services, insurance, governmental
- Travel sites, rewards programs, etc
- Anything you use several times per week or more
- Any service where you have files stored

DE-LINKING GOOGLE FROM THIRD-PARTY APPS

 You're probably wondering now **what can be done** if you use your **Google account** to **log into and/or access** lots of other **important services**?

Can you retroactively **add a different way to access your accounts** if you originally created them by **logging in with Google**?

Sometimes.

This will have to be investigated on a **per-service-basis**, unfortunately.

That's a big part of the reason you should really do your best to whittle your list down to only what is truly essential.

When this is possible, it usually requires going into your account settings on whatever website or app you want to de-link Google from. From there, look for options to add a password or a passkey.

Once one or both of these is set, you can search the settings to see if there is an option to remove your Google account and no longer use it to login with.

MY APPS & WHY THEY MATTER:

- Sites **I use heavily** (OpenAI/ChatGPT, RSS.app, Github)
- Shopping websites that I have a **long order history with** (Etsy, Stitch Fix, Wayfair)
- Sites **tied directly to my identity** (Gravatar, Product Hunt)