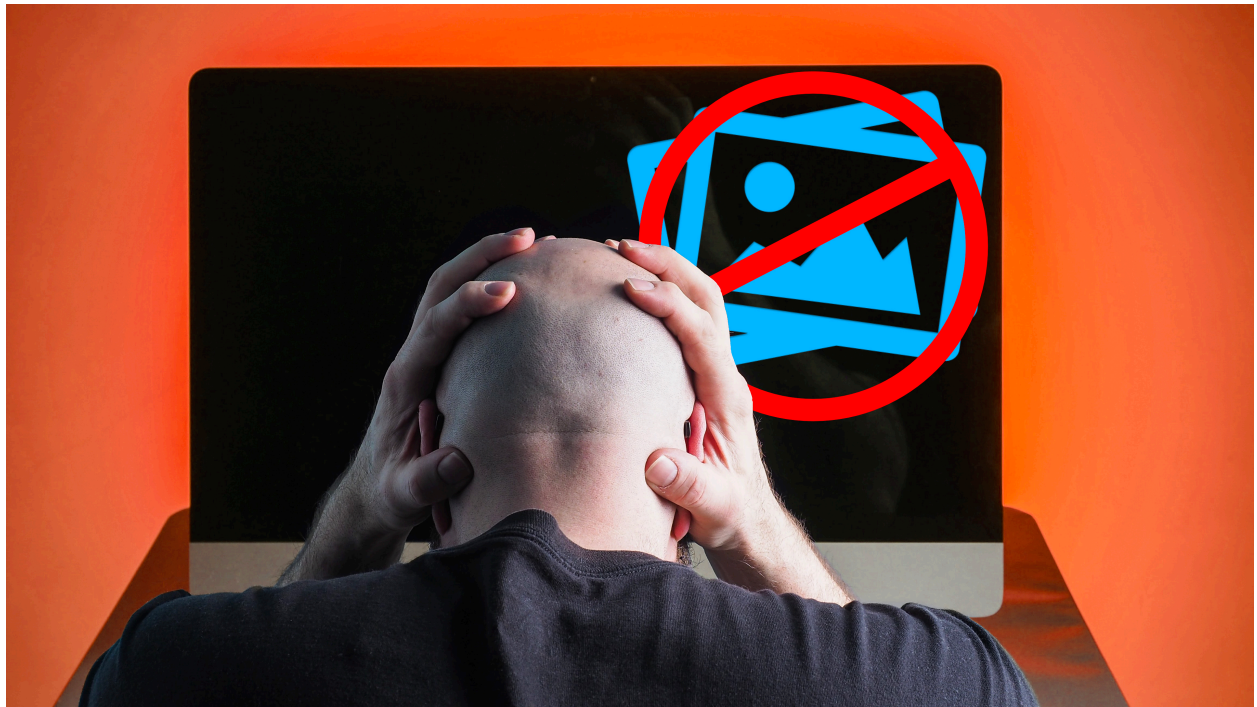


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Best Backup Method For Photographers



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The 3 - 2 - 1 Method

Principles

- 3 - You should have a minimum of three sets of your photos/data
- 2 - Two of those sets should be stored locally, one separate drives/devices
- 1 - At least one of the three sets should be stored off site at a different location

Everything eventually fails. Having three is like having two, having two is like having one, and having one is like having none. Backing up your photos is critical to preserving them.

Creating Your Backup System

Set 1: Your Working Photo Library

Your first set of photos should be the photos you work with on a day to day basis. These may be stored on the internal drive of your computer, or on an external working drive.

Best Practices:

- Ideally these are stored on a drive that is permanently attached to your computer
- This drive should be a working drive only, and should contain no backups/duplications of your photo library
- If this drive is routinely disconnected from your computer, use an alarm or reminder to regularly reconnect it for backups

Set 2: Your Local Backup Photo Library

Your second set of photos is the local backup. These should be stored on a separate/external hard drive, and the backup should happen routinely and automatically through the use of your backup software. *(software options can be found in the resources section)*

Best Practices

- Get a drive that has at least twice the storage capacity as your entire photo library
- This drive should be dedicated to backups, and should never have working files stored on it
- Schedule your backups to occur regularly. Nightly is recommended, but choose a frequency that works best for you

- Ideally this drive will be permanently connected to the computer
- If the drive is not permanently connected, use an alarm or repeating reminder to make sure the backup drive is connected when your backups are scheduled to update.

Set 3: Your Off Site Backup Photo Library

Your third set of photos is the off site backup. These should be stored at an entirely different location from your home/office where your two local sets are kept.

Ideally this backup is done via a cloud backup solution, however if your internet connectivity doesn't allow for a cloud solution, you can roll your own using the instructions below

Best Practices For Cloud Backups

- If you can, use a cloud backup service (*cloud options can be found in the resources section*)
- If you do use a cloud solution, it is best to not use a free service. Free services are uncertain, and often compromised. IF a free solution is your ONLY option, it is better than no cloud backup at all, but it is best avoided.
- If using a cloud service periodically check to see that the backup software is running and that your backups are up to date.

Creating Your Own Off Site Backup

1. Get another external hard drive. Ideally the same brand and size as your local backup
2. Use a sticker or a label to label the new drive as Drive 2, and the local drive as Drive 1
3. Connect Drive 2 to your computer and create an initial backup to it
4. In your backup software, schedule backups to the Drive 2 for the same schedule as Drive 1 (*these backups will not occur when the drive is not present, but this is fine*)
5. Once the backup to Drive 2 is complete, and the schedule is set, take the drive to a safe location.
 1. Ideally a place you go at least once a week
 2. Make sure that the drive is SAFE in this location
6. At least once a week, swap the two drives, taking the drive that is currently stored locally to the off site location, and bringing the drive that is currently off site back to your computer.
7. Use a repeating reminder or alarm to make sure you do not forget to swap your drives.

Notes:

As long as you regularly swap your local and off site drives, the local drive will always be kept up to date (because both drives are scheduled to update on the same schedule).

This sort of system is prone to out of date off site backups because the off site backup is only updated when you make the drive swap. This is why it's critical that you don't forget to swap the drives, and why I recommend a minimum frequency of once a week.

Additional Backup Steps You Can Take

A 3 - 2 - 1 backup system is a great way to protect yourself from losing your photos, but even with a 3 - 2 - 1 system in place, it's still possible that data loss could occur. No system is perfect, and all systems are prone to failure.

With that in mind, these are some additional layers you can add to your system if you choose. *(links in the resources section)*

● Google Photos

While I do not recommend a service like Google Photos as a primary part of your 3 - 2 - 1 backup system, it is great as an additional, low effort off site backup.

Google photos is easy to use, you can just download the software from google, set it up and tell it what to back up, and let it run.

The downside to Google Photos (and why I don't recommend it as a primary part of your backup plan) is that in order to maintain free use of the service, you have to agree to have all of your photos compressed down to 16 megapixels.

Additionally, as a free service, there's no guarantee it'll continue to be available, or to be free, and finally, recovering your photos in bulk is kind of a pain in the butt.

iCloud Photos

Like Google Photos, you can use Apple's iCloud Photos to store all of your photos across your devices and in Apple's cloud. If you're not an Apple/Mac user, iCloud is clearly not a viable option, however if you are an Apple/Mac user, iCloud can be a nice additional layer of backup.

Unlike Google photos, you do have to pay for the storage space you use, and your photos will not be compressed. Additionally you need to commit to using Apple's Photos app.

However, it's still not recommended to use iCloud photos as part of your primary backup solution. Like Google Photos, it can be an easy and low effort, but it is not meant to be and should not be considered a primary off site backup solution.

● Adobe Creative Cloud

If you are already using Adobe's Creative Cloud Photography or Lightroom (or any other of their plans). Then you have some amount of cloud storage included with your plan. You can use that storage to store some or all of your photo library on Adobe's cloud.

I also do not recommend this as a primary part of your backup system. Adobe's cloud service isn't meant to be a dedicated backup solution, and it shouldn't be treated as such. However, like Google Photos, it can be an easy and pretty low effort way to create another layer of redundancy in your system

- **Dropbox or Other Like Service (Box, Google Drive, OneDrive, etc..)**

Cloud solutions like Dropbox can be another low effort way to give yourself some redundancy in your backups.

I use Dropbox to store a folder of all of my final edits exported as high resolution jpegs. This is actually meant to just be an easy way for me to access all of my finished work quickly for printing, social media, and other uses, but it also ends up being a sort of backup as well.

It's not a complete backup, but it is something I could go to if I had multiple catastrophic failures in my backup system.

Services like Dropbox aren't really meant to be backup solutions, so it's not recommended to use it as part of your primary backup system.

Resources

External Hard Drives

These drives I'm linking to are examples and you may want to choose a different capacity. I've used all of the following drives over the years and have been very happy with them.

[Seagate Expansion USB 3.0 External Hard Drive](#)

[Western Digital USB 3.0 My Book External Hard Drive](#)

[Western Digital Passport Portable USB 3.0 External Hard Drive](#)

Backup Software

When choosing backup software, I recommend looking for three key features:

1. Backups can be scheduled
2. It archives changes to the backups (safety net)
3. File versioning (archiving changes to individual files)

macOS: [Carbon Copy Cloner \(CCC\)](#)

I've used CCC for years now, and have been very happy with it. It is regularly updated and has never failed on me.

Windows: [Acronis True Image](#)

I don't use Windows, and so I this recommendation is based on advice from Windows using friends and some additional research on my part.

Conclusion

I am excited to help you in your your photography journey, and with the important task of preserving and backing up your photographs.

And if you're still struggling with your camera and being able to take the kind of photos you want to take, I can help you with that as well, with my [Guide to Shooting in Manual Mode](#) video course.

The course is designed to help photographers like you master your camera and covers things like:

- How cameras work, including more in depth explanations of ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed
- Exactly how to change your ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed settings
- An in depth look at exactly how changing ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed will change your photos
- Exactly how to get Shallow Depth of Field when you want it
- The secret to my I Am Shooting method, which will help you choose the right settings for the photo you want to take every single time
- How to take sharp photos and avoid those crappy blurry photos we never want to take
- and much more...

[Go check it out](#), and then...

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