

## Digital Doings From Propeller Head



### Protecting and Preserving Digital photos.

*Expert advice from Rob Barnes*

Digital camera files are the negatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so you need to keep them to be able to make prints from them. But you have to expect memory cards and disks to break or be corrupted. Here are some tips to help keep your valuable photos safe.

#### **While you're taking photos**

Don't buy a 8Gb card for your once in a lifetime trip to Australia, buy 8 x 1Gb, if you lose one card, or it gets corrupted, you won't lose all the pictures from your trip

Shoot plenty of photos to capture the moment, but sort through them at the end of the day, and delete the ones that didn't work out, so you're not spending money storing rubbish

Don't take a memory card with your only copy of a photo in to a processing shop, in case they mess it up, and lose your photos.

Buy a portable hard disk backup device to take with you, and take a copy of your pictures on to it at the end of the day.

<http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/flashcards/mass.html#p3000>

You can also buy portable standalone CD or DVD writers, which will read, and copy data from memory cards, these are cheaper than the hard disk based ones, and you can use them to make multiple backup copies.

<http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/misc/cddvd.html#dvdburn>

Don't rely on one copy; if you have enough cards, keep second copies as well. If you don't have enough cards, buy one large one (4Gb) and use it to keep a second copy of your important shots.

The top end solution is to buy a laptop (Much better for looking at pictures on, as well). Copy your photos from your cards on to the laptop at the end of each day, and then make a backup copy on to a separate portable USB disk

### **Once you're home.**

Don't just rely on your PC's hard disk. It may break, or one of your family might accidentally delete some of your photos. (Some may get deleted deliberately, if they're embarrassing enough).

At a minimum create a backup on either CD or DVD disks, preferably two, DVDs have much higher storage capacity, which is much more important these days with high mega-pixel cameras. Use write-once, rather than read-write disks, they can't be accidentally overwritten. Use good quality disks; you can buy gold, archive quality now, and treat them carefully.

<http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/flashcards/delkincd.html>

Take one set to work or give them to a relative, so you spread the risk of theft or damage. Check you can read from them every 2 or 3 years, and re-record them every 10 years or so depending on the claimed life of the disks.

A quicker method, and one that's easier to automate, is to back up your photos to an external disk, either connected to the PC by USB:

[http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/misc/laciestorage.html - usb2](http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/misc/laciestorage.html-usb2)

or by your home network:

[http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/misc/laciestorage.html - ethernet](http://www.warehouseexpress.co.uk/?/photo/misc/laciestorage.html-ethernet)

Again, make two copies if you can, these external disks are just as fragile as your PC's disk, you're just spreading the risk by creating more copies. If you use a USB disk, disconnect it, and store it away from

your PC, you're less likely to destroy it by pouring a mug of coffee over it, and the PC. Also, if you have problems with your PC, it can't affect the disk, if it's not connected. Again, periodically check you can read the files, certainly before you do a backup run. You don't want to backup corrupt files from your PC, and over-write what was a good existing backup, and lose all your data. Use an internet based service to store a copy of your files, but still keep a copy yourself, suing them if they lose your files won't get your photos back.

If all this is a bit daunting, don't panic! There are some on-line services that you can use to store and manage your pictures. BT offers one such service, BT Digital Vault <http://www.productsandservices.bt.com/consumerProducts/displayProduct.do?productId=CON-3291> and if you do a Google on 'storing digital images online', you'll come up with lots of other suggestions.

These services allow you to store all your valuable data (pictures, music, videos, documents etc.) on securely managed computers. There is always a charge for this and usually there are limits on the amount of data you can store. However, if you use such a service, you can be sure that you can always get your information back in case of disaster.