

Tree Preservation by George Ruscoe, Part 2

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Having your files organised into folders will be a great help if you want to make a backup copy to a floppy disk or CD. If the volume of data in the folder is not too great, then it may be possible to copy the whole folder to a floppy disk when things have changed. You may not be too worried about copies of letters, but if you have your finances on a spreadsheet, or your family tree in a database, you will not want to lose it. If using a floppy disk, it is probably a good idea to have two and to use them alternately.

If you choose to use a CD whether a write-once or rewritable disk, there is probably so much space on it that you can keep on making a backup at intervals and retaining them all. The best way to do this is to create a new folder on the CD whose name contains the date. If you use the reverse form of 2004-05-07 (or just 040507) then the folders, when listed in name order will also be in date order.

Whichever destination you use, you will probably copy the files by Copy and Paste, although it is possible to drag them with the mouse *. It is easiest to copy a whole folder by moving your display up a level from its contents and then dragging the folder itself, which brings all its contents with it.

It is vitally important to check that your backup is good and going to work if you need it. When you have worked out a scheme, and made your first backup, try restoring it and checking it out. If you have copied a whole folder, then to avoid deleting the current copy before restoring, just rename the current folder (right click on it and choose Rename). For example, if your folder is called Money, and you have copied it onto a floppy disk, rename the copy on your hard disk as xMoney; then copy back the one from the floppy disk by reversing the process. Now check that you can open your spreadsheet or the files that your money program uses. It is not only home users who run their backup procedure religiously every night and then find when they need it that there is nothing useful on the backup disk! A number of large organisations have suffered from not taking the simple precaution of restoring their backup once at least.

You must also label all floppy disks and CDs to say what is on them (do this *before* use to make sure you don't forget). And if you accumulate many backup copies on a CD, keep a paper list of what you have done. If your data is really valuable, consider storing your backup disks on another site; make use of your relations – just in case your house is burgled or burnt down.

Some programs will keep your data in a folder associated with the program; for example my genealogy database resides in C:\Pedigree and that is where the database is held. Other programs will be placed in C:\Program Files\folder with a distinct folder for each. The database or other files may be in the same place.

There is more that could be added on most of these topics. For instance if you have a lot of data, you may compress a group of files into one Zip file which takes up less space to store. You may make use of the Briefcase feature of Windows to keep two copies of your data synchronised. Although intended to keep a laptop and desktop computer "in sync" it will work just as well with a floppy disk as the home of the Briefcase folder.

Using a Briefcase

Here is the technique: insert a blank floppy disk in the drive; in My Computer find the 3½ Floppy icon and click to open it – it should have no contents! Now, either through the File menu or a right-click in the contents panel, select New and then Briefcase *. A briefcase icon will appear, labelled New Briefcase and you may Rename this if you wish, say: My Briefcase. Using Send To and Desktop you may place a Shortcut to My Briefcase on your desktop *. If you create several different Briefcases on different floppies, but call them all by the same name, then this shortcut will access the one on the disk currently in the drive. Now to set up the contents of the Briefcase, Copy to the Briefcase folder all those files that you want to backup onto this disk. If you use Windows Explorer to select your files, first expand My Computer, then the Floppy drive to show My Briefcase in the left hand (Folders) panel. You may then select the files to be copied and drag them directly to the Briefcase. The first time that you try to Open the briefcase it may show the Briefcase Wizard to tell you about how the Briefcase works.

In future, when you want to make a backup of any files that have been changed, insert the relevant floppy disk, and using the shortcut on the Desktop, either Open the Briefcase and use the Briefcase menu item, or right-click, and choose Update All. The briefcase will check if any of the files has been changed and indicate which need to be updated. You can then let it go ahead and do so. This way this group of files will always be up to date, and you need not copy all the files if they have not changed.

You may use a different floppy disk with its My Briefcase folder for different sets of documents. If you want to store more files than will fit on a floppy disk, use a CD instead. You may also make a second

identical briefcase on another floppy disk and use them alternately so that you can go back two stages to earlier versions of your documents.

*** Appendix – Windows techniques**

There are usually three or more ways of doing the same thing. For example let's consider Copy and Paste. In any window there is usually an Edit item in the Menu bar, and when this is expanded into a menu list it contains Copy and Paste among others. The menu may be activated either by the mouse (with a click of the left button) or with the keyboard (press the Alt key and E for Edit, then C for Copy). However, in many cases it is quicker to place the mouse pointer over the item to be copied and then click the right button. This gives a menu appropriate to the context which should contain Copy and Paste; select the one you want with a left click. This use of the right click is always worth trying. On the other hand it is useful to know how to operate from the keyboard in case the mouse packs up.

In Windows Explorer, instead of clicking on the + and – boxes next to a folder name, select the folder (up and down arrows) and press the large + or – keys on the numeric keypad to get the same effect. To move between the Folders panel and the Contents panel use the Tab key. To move up a level in the tree of folders, press Backspace. To move down, select the folder and press Enter.

A menu item often found in the File menu or with the right click (when you click on a filename in Windows Explorer or an icon on the desktop) is Send To. The possible destinations will include the Floppy (A: drive), a CD (probably D: drive), the Desktop (places a shortcut) or a Mail recipient (creates an email with the file as an attachment). This feature enables you to copy a file to a backup disk in one move.

When you drag files to another folder, the effect is normally to move them (or to Cut and Paste). If you are dragging to another device (from hard disk to floppy, say) then a copy is made; but if you want to make a copy (say in an OLD folder) by dragging, hold down the CTRL key while you drag, and the dragged file will also be left where it was.

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