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Making and keeping your own backup, and testing that it works

Backups & Migration

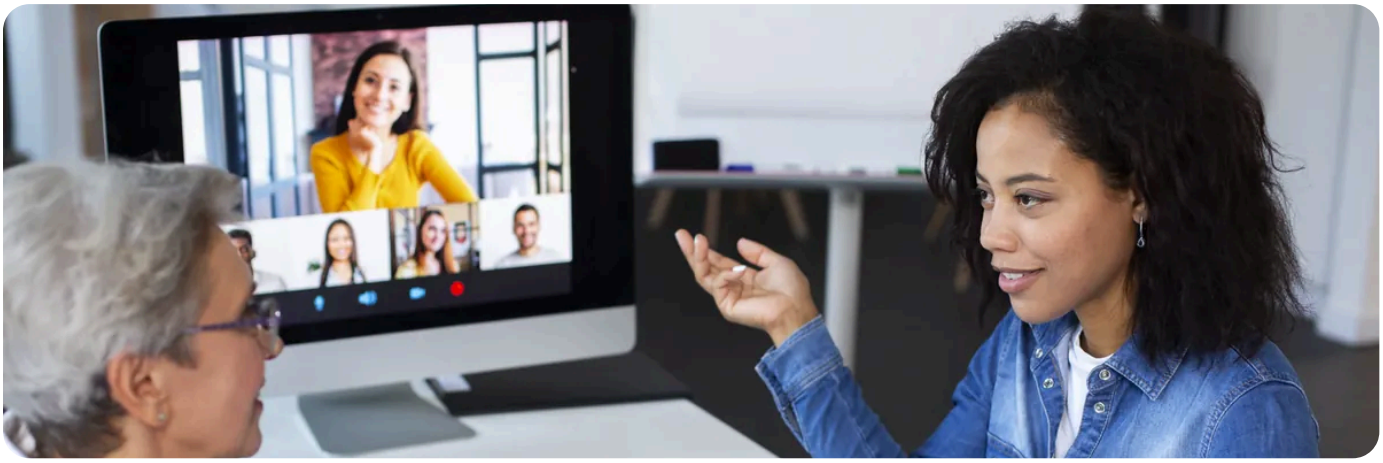
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Making and keeping your own backup, and testing that it works

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Restoring a copy of ours is covered in **how to restore your data with JetBackup**. This article is about the other half, and it is the half usually missing: **having a copy of your own**, kept where we do not touch it, made by you and tested by you.

Why the provider's backup is not enough.
It is not distrust - it is that it solves one kind of problem and not the other. It solves a failing disk and a mistake you made. It does **not** solve: an account closed over a forgotten invoice, a restore requested too late, or a bad change nobody noticed for months that is now in every copy. In those cases the only thing that saves you is a file on *your* computer.

What has to be copied - there are two things

Almost everyone copies half and is convinced they have it all. A site with a database is only safe with **both**:

What	Without it
The files	The contents of *public_html*: theme, plugins, images, code. Without them there is no site.
The database	Text, pages, orders, users, settings. Without it you have a beautiful empty site.
The mailboxes	Only if you use POP; with IMAP the messages live on the server and come in the account copy - see **POP or IMAP**

The simplest route: the full cPanel backup

1. In **cPanel**, open **Backup**.

2. Choose to **download a full account backup**. It is prepared in the background and you are told when it is ready.

3. **Download the file to your computer.** Leaving it on the server is not a backup - it is the same basket.

4. On the same page you can download just the site folder or just one database, which is quicker for frequent copies.

If the site is WordPress.
A backup plugin handles everything by itself and sends the file off-site - to cloud storage, for instance. It is the right option for anyone who will not remember to do it by hand. But confirm once, with your own hands, that the file it produces **actually exists** at the destination: backup plugins failing silently are among the commonest problems there are.

By hand, when you only want part of it

1. **Files:** in File Manager, go into *public_html*, select everything, use *Compress* to make a ZIP and download it.

2. **Database:** in phpMyAdmin, pick the database, the *Export* tab, quick method, SQL format - see **creating databases and using phpMyAdmin**.

3. **Keep both together**, in a folder with the date in its name. Apart, sooner or later one goes missing.

The rule professionals use

It is called **3-2-1**, and it is easy to remember:

```
3 copies of what matters
2 different places
1 away from the office
```

In practice, for a small business: the copy running on the server, one on your computer, and one in cloud storage or on an external disk that stays unplugged. If all three are in the same place, you have one copy, not three.

How often

Type of site	A sensible rhythm
A company site that rarely changes	One copy a month, and always **before** touching anything.

Type of site	A sensible rhythm
A blog or a site with posts	Weekly. Losing a week of writing is annoying; losing three months hurts.
An online shop	Daily, and automated. A lost order is money and a customer - see **an online shop with local payment methods**

Always before touching anything.
Updating WordPress, switching theme, changing PHP version, installing a new plugin: five minutes of backup beforehand saves an afternoon afterwards. It is the rule we see ignored most often and needed most often - see **common WordPress errors**.

The part nobody does: testing it

A copy never restored is a hope, not a backup. We have seen corrupted files, exports truncated halfway, and plugins writing empty folders for months - and in every case it was discovered on the worst possible day.

1. **Open the ZIP** and confirm the theme folder and the uploads folder are in there.
2. **Open the .sql file** in a text editor and see whether it has real content rather than half a dozen lines.
3. **Once a year, restore it for real** onto a test site - see **a test site before touching what is live**. It is the only test that counts.

NEED A HAND?

Want to confirm what your plan keeps, and for how long?

Talk to us →

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