

Authors, Back Up your Digital Files!

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It is not a matter of *if* it will happen, it is a matter of *when*. Every author experiences some kind of data loss. Losing entire book files is an author's nightmare.

This is not a new problem. In 1922, Earnest Hemingway's first wife Hadley took along Hemingway's works in progress—and the carbon copies—on a train ride. On the train, the case she'd put them in mysteriously disappeared and was never found.

This can even happen to a modern, high-tech company. At Pixar studios, they almost lost the entire movie, *Toy Story 2*, when there was a computer failure, and they discovered their backup system had stopped working a month before. Fortunately, there was one single copy of the movie that a technical director happened to take home with him.

Your worst nightmare does not have to come true! Making safe backups is actually easy, and there are automated ways to do it, so you don't have to even remember to do anything.

Let's look at a variety of ways to back up your writing files.

Saving your files locally:

By locally, I mean on a drive that you keep at your house.

1. First, if you use a writing app that doesn't save automatically (such as MS Word), **save early and often**. Get in the habit of saving after every sentence (use the keyboard shortcut: Control-S or Command-S).
2. Back up your files to a **thumb drive**. The inexpensive devices are available almost anywhere, and they are quick and easy. Put all your writing files into one folder on your computer, then simply make a backup of that folder at the end of each writing session. Be sure to store your thumb drive in a safe place.
3. Back up your files to an **external hard drive**. External hard drives are reasonably priced (you can get a 1 terabyte hard drive for \$40), and they are spacious enough for you to back up your entire computer.

Most importantly, with an external hard drive, you can use certain software apps to back up your entire computer automatically.

On a Mac – use **TimeMachine** (automatically backs up entire computer)

On a PC – use **File History** (automatically backs up designated folders of files)

Or use **Windows Backup** (Windows 11)

Or, if you want to back up your *entire* PC, there are third part apps for this.

Saving your files to the cloud:

You definitely should use at least one of the local backup strategies described above, but that's not enough. Why? Because it is not a good idea to have all your files, including backups, in one house. A fire could destroy them all. Someone could steal them all. If you take your laptop and backup drive into one bag, you might lose that bag.

By the *cloud*, I mean storage places on the internet, away from your house. There are some terrific and easy ways to store your writing files in the cloud.

1. *Email your files to yourself.*

It's simple—just attach your file (or a folder that you've "zipped up") to an email, and send the email to your own cloud email account, like your Gmail address.

I do this regularly when I am working on a book. Then I move the email from my Inbox to a Book Backups folder I created in Gmail.

2. *Upload your files to Google Drive.*

If you have a Gmail account, you also have Google Drive. To get to it, click the 3x3 square of dots at the top of your email screen, then select *Drive*.

Game-changing feature: You can install the Google Drive app on your computer, and designate a folder on your computer that is automatically backed up. If that folder contains all your writing files, the entire folder is automatically backed up to the Google drive (in the cloud) every time you make a change to any file in that folder, and every time you add a new file to the folder. So, once you set it up, you don't have to do anything!

15 GB of storage is free (spread across your Google Drive, Gmail account, and Google Photos).
\$9.99/month for 2 *terabytes* of storage

3. *Upload your files to Dropbox.*

Similar in some ways to Google Drive. But there are differences
(<https://zapier.com/blog/dropbox-vs-google-drive>)

Game-changing feature: You can install the Dropbox app on your computer, and designate a folder on your computer that is automatically backed up. If that folder contains all your writing files, the entire folder is automatically backed up to the Dropbox (in the cloud) every time you make a change to any file in that folder, and every time you add a new file to the folder. So, once you set it up, you don't have to do anything!

2 GB of storage is free (not shared with email or anything else)... but you often get extra added on over time)
\$11.99/month for 2 *terabytes* of storage

4. *There are numerous other cloud storage services* too (OneDrive, Sync.com, Box, and more)