

Mac & Chromebook | Medium | 2 min read

Mac: Time Machine backup basics

Time Machine is the backup tool built into every Mac. It saves copies of your files so you can get them back if something is lost, deleted or your Mac fails.

What you need

An external hard drive or SSD that is larger than the amount of data on your Mac. A drive at least twice the size of your Mac's storage works best. Plug it in using the right cable or adapter.

Set up Time Machine

1. Plug in the drive.
2. Open **System Settings**, then **General**, then **Time Machine**. On older versions, open **System Preferences** and choose **Time Machine**.
3. Click **Add Backup Disk** (or **Select Disk**) and choose your drive.
4. If asked, you may choose to encrypt the backup. This is a good idea. Write down the password and keep it safe, as nobody can recover the backup without it.
5. Confirm to set up the disk.

Be careful: your Mac may offer to erase the drive first. Only agree if there is nothing on it that you need.

Keep it running

The first backup can take hours. Leave your Mac switched on and plugged in. After that, Time Machine backs up every hour while the drive is connected. Reconnect the drive regularly if you unplug it, as a backup that is months old will not help much.

Get a file back

1. Open the folder where the file used to live.
2. Click the **Time Machine** icon in the menu bar and choose **Browse Time Machine Backups**.
3. Go back through time, select the file, and click **Restore**.

Good habits

- Check the date of the last backup in the Time Machine settings.
- Keep the drive in a safe place.
- For extra safety, also keep important files in iCloud or another storage service.

When to get more help

Contact us if Time Machine says the backup failed, if the drive is full, if the drive is not showing up, or if you want help getting a whole Mac back from a backup.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.