

Scams & online safety | Medium | 2 min read

Ransomware basics and why backups matter

Ransomware is a type of harmful software that locks your files and demands money to unlock them. It sounds frightening, but a simple habit makes it far less of a worry: keeping good backups.

How ransomware usually arrives

- Opening an attachment in an email you were not expecting.
- Clicking a link to a fake website.
- Installing software from an unreliable source.
- Not keeping the computer up to date.

Signs something is wrong

- Your files will not open, or their names have changed.
- A message appears demanding payment and giving a deadline.

What to do if it happens

1. **Disconnect the computer from the internet**, by turning off Wi-Fi or unplugging the cable.
2. Unplug any external drives, so they are not affected too.
3. **Do not pay.** Payment does not guarantee you get your files back and it encourages the criminals.
4. Do not restart repeatedly or try to delete things.
5. Get help from someone you trust. We can check what has happened.
6. Report it to Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) at reportfraud.police.uk or on 0300 123 2040, or Police Scotland on 101.

Why backups are your safety net

If you have a recent copy of your files somewhere else, you can clean the computer and restore them. No ransom is needed.

A simple backup plan

The common advice is "3-2-1":

- Keep **3** copies of important files.
- Use **2** different places, such as an external drive and the cloud.
- Keep **1** copy away from the computer.

Disconnect an external drive when you are not backing up. A drive left plugged in can be locked too.

Reduce the risk

- Install updates when asked.
- Be careful with attachments, especially from people you do not know.
- Keep Windows Security turned on.

When to get more help

If you are not sure your files are backed up, ask us to set up a plan with you. It takes less time than most people expect.

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.