

Small business IT | Easy | 2 min read

The 3-2-1 backup rule for a small business

Losing your customer records, invoices or photos can stop a small business overnight. The **3-2-1 rule** is a simple way to make sure that never happens.

What 3-2-1 means

- **3** copies of your important data: the original plus two backups.
- **2** different types of storage, for example your computer and an external drive, or a drive and a cloud service.
- **1** copy kept away from your premises, so a fire, flood or theft cannot take everything.

A newer version, 3-2-1-1, adds one copy that cannot be changed or deleted (an "immutable" copy), which helps against ransomware.

What to back up

1. List the things you could not do without: accounts files, customer lists, contracts, photos, email.
2. Note where each lives: a laptop, a shared drive, a cloud app.
3. Remember that cloud apps such as Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace are not automatically a full backup. If a file is deleted or encrypted by ransomware, it can be gone for good after a short time.

A practical set-up

- Copy one: your working files on the computer or shared drive.
- Copy two: an external drive that you plug in, back up to, then unplug and store safely. A drive left plugged in can be encrypted by ransomware along with everything else.
- Copy three: an automatic cloud backup service, ideally with several days or weeks of old versions kept.

Keep it working

- Set backups to run automatically, not from memory.
- Turn on email alerts if a backup fails.
- **Test a restore** every few months by recovering a few files. A backup you have never tested is only a hope.
- Encrypt backup drives and keep any recovery keys somewhere safe.

When to get more help

Ask for help if you are unsure what is and is not being backed up, if backups have been failing, if you hold sensitive customer data, or if you need to restore after a loss. We can set up and test a proper backup plan with you.

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.