

Backing up your data is critical to managing your computer and safeguarding your irreplaceable data. Unfortunately, hardware does fail from time to time. How nice to be prepared for that hard disk crash or virus attack. Windows XP Professional comes ready to run and is wizard based. It can usually be found in Start/Programs/Accessories/System Tools. It is important to make sure all your data is stored in the My Documents folder. Any that is not, think about moving it or else make note of where it is located on your computer. For example, some camera software will save your photos to its own pre-determined location buried away in your Program Files. Just run the wizard and you will be presented with the following choices:

What do you want to backup?

- 1 My documents and settings
- 2 Everyone's documents and settings
- 3 All information on this computer
- 4 Let me choose what to back up

Then you need to decide where to back up to. The default is to backup to floppy disk but unless you have many hours to spare and hundreds of disks forget it! Probably, the wisest choice is to backup up to CD or DVD. These are inexpensive these days and 1 or 2 disks will probably hold everything. Don't forget to set a schedule so you don't forget to run the backup. You will then be safe if anything awful happens. Microsoft suggests backing up to another partition if available but this is not a good idea if your hard disk fails.

To backup in XP Home the procedure is the same but the backup program is not installed by default as it is in XP Pro. To install in XP Home you need your installation disk. On the welcome to xp home screen select additional tasks and select Browse this CD. Navigate to the Value Add folder and Msft. Double-click the file Ntbackup.msi to install. From there follow the instructions above as for XP Pro. Next month we will have a look at Vista's backup.