

THE COMPUTER CORNER

Critical File Backups for Win95, Part 3

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Here we are with the last batch file for your quick backup. This one backs up several critical files found in your WINDOWS subdirectory. Here it is, short and sweet:

```
rem      echo off
rem      MYWINBAK.BAT (type the date you created this file in
here)
      cd c:\windows
echo      Copying SYSTEM.DAT, DA0 and INI
      attrib -s -r -h system.*
      copy system.* e:\backups\win
      attrib +s +r +h system.dat
      attrib +s +r +h system.da0
pause
echo      Copying USER.DAT and DA0
      attrib -s -r -h user.*
      copy user.* e:\backups\win
      attrib +s +r +h user.dat
      attrib +s +r +h user.da0
pause
echo      Copying this batch file
      copy c:\mywinbak.bat e:\backups\win
echo      All done backing up with MYWINBAK!
```

The `cd c:\windows` moves you to the windows subdirectory. The `attrib` command removes the system, read only and hidden attributes from those that have them. All `SYSTEM.*` files are then copied to the backup subdirectory, and then the attributes of those that were changed are restored. The same process is repeated with all `USER.*` files - removing the attributes, copying the files and restoring the attributes. Finally, the batch file itself is backed up and the entire process is complete.

While I have selected to copy these windows subdirectory backup files to my drive e: in the `backups\win` subdirectory, your destination might be different. For example, if you have a single C: partition, replace all instances of `e:\backups\win` in the batch file with `c:\backups\win`. Again, be sure that the subdirectory exists before running the batch file the first time.

Those of you who are power users might have written these batch files differently, using a different ploy with regard to hidden and system files, or even using `XCOPY` in place of `COPY` to create the subdirectories in case they didn't exist previously. However, I am a great believer in the KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid), and these versions do the job for me. I also like splitting the task into the three files I have shown you in this series - one for backing up the registry, one for critical files found in the root directory and one for those found in the windows subdirectory. It keeps things neat and in order.

Now that you have all these backups, what are you going to do with them besides perusing them when trying to figure out what they are? Well, let me give you a (very) short course in what several of these files are.

In the first of these three articles, you created REGBAK.REG. This file is actually a complete backup of two files, SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT. It is readable with a text editor. You can double click it while in windows (from the Explorer), and your current SYSTEM.DAT and USER.DAT files will be updated to reflect what is in REGBAK.REG. DON'T DO THIS unless you are having trouble and have exhausted all other avenues. Keep it as a learning tool and as a backup of last resort. You can also practice editing it with the Registry Editor (REGEDIT.EXE) later, when you get good at this stuff (read that as no longer dangerous).

The second article backed up a number of miscellaneous files, including DOS files. For example, SYSTEM.1ST is created immediately after successful completion of the original Win95 setup procedure. It becomes out of date very soon, but may be of some use in a real emergency. Again, you may get the "File not found" message with some of these, but don't worry about it. Absence or presence of some of these files depends on whether you upgraded from Windows 3.1, or bought a machine with a dealer-installed copy of Win95 on it.

This third article's batch file created the most useful backups, those of the most critical files. The USER.DAT file contains user-specific data (you), and USER.DA0 is a backup of it that Windows itself makes when it opens successfully. Indeed, if Win95 fails to open successfully, it may copy the file USER.DA0 to USER.DAT automatically. By backing these two up, you have two working copies of USER information that were created when Win95 opened successfully. In a real emergency, you can always overwrite USER.DAT with one of your backups, by hand.

Similarly, SYSTEM.DAT contains system specific data (data about the hardware and software on your machine), while SYSTEM.DA0 is an automatic Windows-made backup immediately after it opened successfully the last time. Again, if something fails, Win95 may itself copy the DA0 file to the DAT file, thus restoring your system to happiness. And, again, in a dire emergency, you can hand copy one of the backups you made, if Windows fails to restore things to health. In case of trouble that Windows itself cannot hurdle, copy your thoughtfully made DA0 file from the BACKUPS subdirectory to the WINDOWS subdirectory and try to start Windows again. This time, when it tries to copy the backup DA0 file to the DAT file, it will be using a good version - the one you saved during your astute backup procedure. If it works, you can pat yourself on the back!

Are all these backups paranoia? I don't think so. I think they are a couple of megabytes of disk space well spent. Remember that gremlin that lives in every computer? If you do nothing to insure your safety, he is sure to zap you. However, if you take reasonable steps to back things up, he will leave you alone.

That's it. Learn all you can. Back up often. Keep that gremlin cussing cause he can't zap you today. Happy computing!