Backup Options

Why backup your data?
Put simply, having a copy of your files saved somewhere other than to your local computer is much safer than having them only in one location. When you have your files saved in an external location, you have less chance of losing data should your computer suffer damage or malfunction.

How often should I back up my data?
The frequency you should backup your data is entirely up to you, although you should do so on a regular basis. Additionally, you should backup more often if you’re working on important documents (e.g. papers or projects) or have just made major changes to your computer.

What are my options?
There are two major options available to you to back up data. These are cloud-based services and backing up to an external hard drive.

- **Cloud-based**
  A cloud is another name for a server. As such, your data is backed up to a server in a remote location that you will have access to. Cloud-based backup services vary considerably, but typically there is a desktop interface that you can download, as well as a web based applet, that you can use to transfer files securely to and from the cloud.

- **External hard drive**
  An external hard drive is a physical hard drive that you plug in to your computer via USB or firewire connection to transfer files to. As a physical drive, it is vulnerable to typical hazards such as gravity and water damage. Many external hard drives come with their own back-up utility, and can be configured to back up data immediately when plugged in to the computer. Note that to be visible to a PC, and thus be able to back up data, hard drives must be formatted as NTFS or FAT, or FAT32. The majority of hard drives come preformatted for use with a PC.

- **Time Machine (Mac)**
  One way to back up files on a Mac is to use Time Machine. Time Machine automatically backs up the entire system in Mac OS X v10.5 or later. It keeps up-to-date copies of everything on the computer and users can easily restore data if needed. Time Machine can be used with external hard drives, by connecting to a Time Capsule or a secondary internal disk if the Mac has one (a disk that it doesn’t start up from). To learn more about Time Machine, go here: [http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1427](http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1427)