



Dumminger Photography

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Your family photos may disappear in just a few years.

Frightening, isn't it?

According to Carnegie Mellon, the lifespan of a computer hard drive is just over three years. Computer hard drives wouldn't have statistics like **MTBF** – **Mean Time Before Failure** – if failure and loss of data weren't an everyday occurrence." That's why it's really important to back up your photos on CDs or DVDs.

How to burn a CD on a computer using Windows XP

Insert a blank, writeable CD into the CD recorder.

Open the Windows utility **My Computer**

Click the files or folders you want to copy to the CD. To select more than one file, hold down the CTRL key while you click the files you want. Then, under **File and Folder Tasks**, click **Copy this file**, **Copy this folder**, or **Copy the selected items**.

If the files are located in My Pictures, under **Picture Tasks**, click **Copy to CD** or **Copy all items to CD**, and then skip to step 5.

In the **Copy Items** dialog box, click the CD recording drive, and then click **Copy**.

In My Computer, double-click the CD recording drive. Windows displays a temporary area where the files are held before they are copied to the CD. Verify that the files and folders that you intend to copy to the CD appear under **Files Ready to be Written to the CD**.

Under **CD Writing Tasks**, click **Write these files to CD**. Windows displays the CD Writing Wizard.

Follow the instructions in the wizard.

Notes

- To open My Computer, click **Start**, and then click **My**

Computer.

- Do not copy more files to the CD than it will hold. Standard CDs hold up to 650 megabytes (MB). High-capacity CDs hold up to 850 MB.
- Be sure that you have enough disk space on your hard disk to store the temporary files that are created during the CD writing process. For a standard CD, Windows reserves up to 700 MB of the available free space. For a high-capacity CD, Windows reserves up to 1 gigabyte (GB) of the available free space.
- After you copy files or folders to the CD, it is useful to view the CD to confirm that the files are copied.

CDs and DVDs can be longer-lived, but only if you choose wisely and follow some simple rules.

First, **don't pinch pennies when you buy CDs for important storage**. That means you should buy Compact Disks whose top layer is coated with gold rather than any less stable metal. The bottom of the disk, where the data heads work, is actually pretty well protected. It's the label side that is most vulnerable.

The **biggest no-no** is writing on the label with a Sharpie or other solvent-based pen. Use only special CD pens with a water-based ink. The way you store your CDs can also make a difference. Standing them upright, rather than lying flat, extends the average life. Avoiding extreme heat or humidity is recommended practice.

If your CD burning drive has variable speeds, recording at a lower speed reduces wobble, which can lead to problems in the future.

DVDs can have the same problems, with the additional concern that there is no single standard format.

It would almost be funny, if it weren't so frightening. We've made prints from glass plates going back before the War Between the States, but we're likely to lose most of the digital pictures being taken in the 21st century! Negatives and prints may fade a little, but binary data files have this annoying tendency to disappear!

Here's a simple plan to keep family photos safe:

- Copy them all onto the best quality CDs available
- Make extra copies and "give" them to your children or other relatives each Christmas. That not only gives the kids something they will enjoy, it gives you a place to recover his photos if the house burns down.
- When new technology emerges, copy all those CDs to that new media.

And perhaps the best archive of all? Print all the important pictures and throw them in a shoebox!

Will our gold CDs really last 300 years? We hope so, but won't be around to guarantee it