

CD Burners, DVD Burners, and External Hard Drives

The following three systems are highly effective for archiving photographs.

CD Burner

To record (called “burn” or “write”) data from your computer to individual writable CD-ROMs you need a CD burner. The discs must be writable, or made for recording, and in one of two varieties: CD-R or CD-RW. You can record on CD-Rs over multiple sessions until the disc is full, but you cannot record new information on the disc once it is full. With CD-RWs, you can record in multiple sessions and also record over the information later. Note that CD-RWs are not as stable as CD-Rs. They have been known to cause problems when opened on a computer system other than the one used to record them.

Most new computers sold today include a CD burner, called an internal burner, built into the computer. Also available are external CD burners, which are connected to the computer via a USB or Firewire connection. CD burners are becoming less and less expensive, and CDs themselves can be purchased for as little as 20 cents each.

The disadvantage of CD burners is that their capacity is limited to about 700MB, which translates to about fifty high-resolution 5x7 photos. Though it would take some time to save many high-resolution images, the speed at which they are burned is quite fast—depending on the model and age of your CD burner.

DVD Burner

DVDs are similar to CDs, but they hold about six times the amount of information that CDs do. Many computers come with a built-in DVD burner. If your computer does not, you can purchase an external one. DVD burners and DVDs are more expensive than CD burners and CDs, but they are continually decreasing in price.

External Hard Drive

An excellent, and perhaps the least time consuming, system for backing up images is an external hard drive. An external hard drive is just like the hard drive in your computer, but it comes encased in a box and is connected to your computer via a USB or Firewire connection. External hard drives can hold an enormous amount of data and are becoming more and more reasonable in cost. They are available in capacities of 100 GB up to and exceeding 400 GB. Hard drive capacities are now available in terabytes (TB). One terabyte is equivalent to approximately one thousand gigabytes. Now you can purchase 7TB hard drives. That's a lot of photos!

There are several advantages to using an external hard drive.

- You can record as many files as you want without having to change discs.
- Files can be deleted to add more storage space.
- They are portable and can be used anywhere.
- They are considered by many to be the most stable means of storing files.