

## ***Backup4all v2.3***

**Reviewed by:** [Jack Reikel](#), May 2005

**Published by:** [Softland SRL](#)

**Requires:** Windows 95, 98, NT, Me, 2000, XP or XP 2003 Server

**MSRP:** US\$30.00 (Classic), US\$45.00 (Pro)

If the latest online and broadcast harangues by Leo Laporte (The Screen Savers, Call for Help, Leo Laporte Show on LA's KFI radio) and Kickstartnews Managing Editor Howard Carson (and me) and every other guru out there about doing regular data backups of your hard drive is beginning to sound irritating, it's only because we've all fielded a lot plaintive phone calls and e-mail from unlucky people who've lost a mess of files and don't know what to do. The solution to any problem of that kind begins before the problem happens of course. You've got to do regular backups. The wonderful, inexpensive hard drives which are absolutely fundamental to a stable and secure computing environment can and will fail at the most inopportune moments. Often, data which was not backed up prior to the drive failure is lost forever. On the other hand, individual files are sometimes accidentally deleted and can be restored by quick action with one of the many reliable Undelete utilities. If you don't have an undelete utility handy however, a recent backup will do the trick.

Backup4all is an award-winning backup program for Windows (Ed. Note: Okay—it's true—almost every publication and download site offers plaudits, and there are dozens of them, but an award is still an award). Backup4all is designed to protect data from partial or total loss by automating backup tasks, password protecting backups and compressing backups in order to save storage space. The program is available in four editions: Professional, Classic, Mirror and OTB (which stands for Outside The Box and is available strictly to OEMs). Professional offers full functionality. The other versions offer various limitations.

I installed Backup4all on a low-rent 1.7GHz Pentium 4 Celeron PC (the socket 478 version). The computer is normally used to perform network maintenance tasks, general network backups and a few productivity tasks. The program installed without incident. I used Backup4all almost daily over a period of five weeks to perform full, differential, and incremental backup chores. During the usage and testing period I experienced no problems of any kind with Backup4all. Crashes, lockups and inconsistent operation were non-existent. I also found the interface to be responsive, well laid out and logically ordered, something which is particularly important in a program designed to help you tackle the unavoidable drudgery of backing up crucial data with monotonous frequency.

The first thing you'll notice about the actual backup files that they're all in ZIP format. Some of the features typically available for ZIP files are also available including password protection and encryption, especially important if your backups are going to be handled by someone other than yourself. ZIP format means your backups are also portable because you don't need Backup4all to retrieve individual files or entire drives full of data.

The second thing you may notice is that Backup4all doesn't need a separate CD or DVD burning program to do its work. The program has its own CD/DVD burning routines which worked flawlessly for me with a wide variety of media in two different drives. I used a Yamaha CRW-F1 CD/RW and a LiteOn 1622S DVD+/-RW. Backup4all supports Universal Disk Format (UDF) as well, which allows you to manipulate files directly on CD/RW and DVD/RW media, which helps when you're doing a restore of individual files or folders (as opposed to a full restore).

I used the built-in scheduler to set up a series of backups. Configuring the backups was extremely easy, with lots of flexible options for convenient timing, formatting and storage. The program interface is intuitive and functions very efficiently, meaning that there are very few intermediate steps to take once you've decided what sort of backup you want to do. Dantz, maker of the venerable and extremely powerful Retrospect Backup, despite its preeminence in the backup market could take some really important lessons in user interface design from Softland.

Once your backup is complete you can access a tree view of everything to see how many files are backed up, the total space allocated for the current backup on the target drive or disc, how many files will be added at the next execution, the available free space on the target drive or disc and about a half dozen other details. Backup4all does a reasonably good job of tracking individual file versions as well, which means you can selectively restore the state of any file. It's a feature unique to Backup4all. I found it particularly useful when searching through backups to find a particular version of a sequentially edited audio file.

Cons: In the Restore dialog, it initially looks as though there's no way to Select All or Deselect All, but the keyboard space bar along with your arrow keys can be used. Read the online help system. The Wizard icon is just a square button and you'll never guess what it's for until you hover the mouse over it so that the pop-up can tell you what it is. The otherwise excellent user interface could be even better after a bit of tweaking in this area. Not the best choice for full system backups and it does not create boot or rescue CDs—it's best for data backups and Documents & Settings backups.

Pros: The program is very easy to use and doesn't get in the way of the task at hand which is to back up the drives, folders or even individual files you designate. Automating backups is a simple matter using the straightforward and versatile tools provided. I really liked the unobtrusive operation of this utility. Lots of really nice little features too, for example the Clear Backup option which is customizable and lets you quickly set the number of days a backup version will be kept before being automatically cleared. This feature is especially useful in situations where backed up data in files becomes stale, as in monthly financial reports for instance. Restoring full backups is simple. Restoring individual folders and files from within a large backup is also simple using the Explorer-like file and folder tree. Backup4all does not demand your undivided attention, it works fast, and it saves backups on hard drives, CD-R/RW and DVD-/+R/RW. Once you've installed Backup4all, you will no longer have any excuse for not doing regular backups. Highly recommended.

Letters to the Editor are welcome and occasionally abused in public. Send e-mail to:  
[whine@kickstartnews.com](mailto:whine@kickstartnews.com)