

Larkware

We get up early so that you don't have to.

Review: Backup4all

Backup4all 2.3.3, starting at \$25

Softland

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

0040-364-401338

<http://www.backup4all.com/>

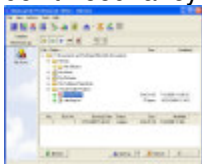
As professional developers, we all know there are some software tools that we shouldn't do without: source code control and bug tracking, for example. Given how dedicated we are about that sort of thing, it's amazing how many developers I find who neglect some of the other basic tools that any user should have. Backup software, for example. When was the last time you backed up *your* crucial files? Do you even have any backup software? And if not, why not? Over the weekend I took a look at Backup4all, which is an inexpensive (pricing ranges from \$25 for a version that just mirrors your files to another location to \$45 for the Professional Edition with all the features) but pretty slick backup utility with quite a range of features.

For starters, the software is small - under 4MB to download, just over 5MB installed. In this age of bloatware, that's refreshing. The user interface is simple and obvious: you get a list of backups (things like "My Documents" or "Full C: Drive"), an Explorer-style window to see what's in the current backup, and toolbar buttons for backup, restore, and test. Defining a new backup is a matter of running through a wizard. This takes you through half a dozen screens, but the choices are all pretty easy; the toughest thing you'll need to understand is the difference between full, incremental, differential, and mirror backups.

Backups can be written to a folder on the local computer, or off somewhere across your LAN. You can also write directly to removable media such as CD-R or DVD-RW; Backup4all includes its own direct CD and DVD writing software. There's also a "one-touch backup" mode that integrates with USB drives that can trigger executables, as some can. You can start a backup from the program's user interface, from the tray icon that the program minimizes to, or from the built-in scheduler (no need to mess with Windows scheduler here). The backup format is essentially a zip file, though there's an added catalog that the program uses to store some metadata.

Restores are similarly easy. If you want to just restore everything from a particular backup, that takes a click on the toolbar button, but things are a lot more flexible than that. Select a backup, and you can drill down into individual files and see every version that you've ever backed up. It's simple to select and restore any arbitrary version you want. You can also take advantage of include and exclude lists on both backup and restore operations. And because the backup archives are zip files, in case of disaster you can restore files from them to any other computer whether that computer has Backup4all installed or not.

Sure, there are lots of backup programs out there. Are you using any of them? If not, and you don't need fancy high-end enterprise features, this is a darned good one to start with.



[Mike Gunderloy](#) is the lead developer for Larkware and author of numerous books and articles on programming topics.