

Back up files from a virus-infected computer

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Treat the copy as untrusted until you scan it on a healthy PC. We do not promise the copy is clean. Microsoft Defender on the destination machine is the built-in scanner. Buying a paid suite is not required to copy photos.

1. Copy Documents, Desktop, Pictures, Videos, and tax or school folders. Skip Program Files, Windows, mystery .exe installers, and random downloads.
2. Safer: shut the PC down. Pull the drive or boot a trusted live USB and copy from outside Windows.
3. If you must copy while Windows is running: use a dedicated USB, copy only those folders, eject, and label it 'untrusted until scanned.'
4. On a healthy PC, open Windows Security and scan the removable drive. Do not copy detections onto the new Desktop.
5. Do not double-click unknown .exe, .scr, .js, or Office files with macros. Prefer photos and PDFs after a clean scan.
6. Then clean or wipe the old machine (Defender Offline, one scanner, reset if it returns).

Cloud upload from the sick PC is weaker than a local copy you can scan.

Change email and banking passwords from a device that never ran the old Windows install. IdentityTheft.gov if a tax PDF may have held an SSN.

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