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The Best PC Apps for Students

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Midterms, grades, term papers and finals — school is filled with challenges that can make even the most organized student lose sleep.

But creating more efficiency in your schedule and choosing apps that streamline your work can boost success — and even prevent an all-nighter. Here are some popular apps to make the most of your school time, so there's plenty of time for play, too.

Evernote

Forget the piles of paper notebooks that can get lost or trashed. [Evernote](#) gathers information in a way that's accessible and searchable from anywhere, and lets you throw in any kind of data. You can capture notes from class, Web pages mentioned by a professor, photos of your goofy friends, audio notes to yourself or just about anything that can be downloaded.

This app also allows you to organize the information and then do keyword searches. You can even find text that's stored in handwritten form — try doing that with a notebook filled during a Monday morning class.

Memonic

Another great, affordable way to organize, [Memonic](#) keeps notes arranged in a clutter-free Web interface. You can edit notes right from the Web browser, use keyboard shortcuts to be even speedier and customize the look with different backgrounds (easy on the eyes means easier to use, right?).

The Web clipper feature stands out as a way to save Web pages for later reading, without having to bulk up your browser's bookmarks folder. You can even forward emails and attachments to your collection. Think of it as a personal assistant that does everything but your laundry — and if you find an app for that, let us know.

Google

Many students love to tap into Google apps for organizing class schedules and keeping track of assignment due dates. [Google Calendar](#) can issue reminders and present information in a simple interface. If a professor uses the app as well, you can usually view that calendar along with yours. For sharing work among students, sending a draft to the professor or creating a spreadsheet, [Google Docs](#) makes it all easy.

Dropbox

Part of staying organized is centralizing all your stuff. [Dropbox](#) lets you keep your files, end-of-semester reports and essays in one place, and you can access it from any device or computer as long as you have an Internet connection.

For those who have to share computers or fret about losing their data, this app is a great way to store data without having to pay for portable drives or cloud services. It's even got student roots: one of the company founders came up with the idea after repeatedly forgetting his USB flash drive during college.

Plants vs. Zombies

No one can study 24/7. So why not fight zombies in your free time? In the quirky [Plants vs. Zombies](#) game, you install plants to stem a zombie attack (apparently, they hate freshly planted Zen gardens the most). Or, you can switch sides and make your own zombie instead.

With such a wealth of note-taking power, schedule organization and document sharing, you can tackle those college tasks with ease. Best of all, these apps are free — leaving you more money for the party fund.

For a killer list of mobile apps, check out "[The Six Best Mobile Apps for Students.](#)"

Bringing Your Computer Data into the 21st Century

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EasyTech tells you why — and how — you should salvage your files from outmoded storage systems.

Are you trapped in the past when it comes to data backup? If you're still saving documents, photos, videos and other media to CD or DVD (hello, 1995?) or even (cough) floppy disks, then this article is for you.

But we don't want to sound too harsh. After all, it's great that you've developed the backup habit. That will serve you well when deciding on a new, more reliable way to back up your stuff. Read on for the lowdown on why and how to rescue those files stashed away in dusty corners, in crumpled shoeboxes or on old PCs.

Ditch the Disk Approach

For an idea of where we're coming from, check out some of the funny videos produced by [ioSafe](#), which makes tough-as-nails external hard drives. The videos show "indestructible" ioSafe drives surviving floods, fires, and even the crunching wheels of a tractor.

We'll assume you don't park your backup system behind the barn, so losing your data to a run-in with farm equipment might not be your most pressing concern. But the message is an important one: Don't waste time and effort backing up your stuff, only to see it damaged or disintegrated by an unfortunate accident, an act of nature or the simple passage of time.

Even if you're storing your disks in a safe spot, out of the reach of thieves and your curious preschooler, the discs are at risk. After just a few years, disks can begin to degrade and lose their data. Extreme temperatures, humidity and handling are all possible culprits. Plus, disks take up a lot of space.

The sad truth is that even modern data-storage technologies, like flash memory and platter-based hard drives, can fail or degrade over time. So, whether you're storing your wedding pictures or crucial business data, developing a strategy for a more secure backup system is your best move.

As you mull over your possibilities for backing up files, keep a few rules in mind: 1. Be open to paying (a little) for security and simplicity. 2. Use more than one strategy, including offsite storage. 3. Give serious consideration to cloud services for the ultimate backup.

Go Way Beyond the Floppy

The best ways to back up your stuff today? Let's look at the basic onsite and offsite options.

Physical drives: The new breeds of external hard drives are fast and tough. They hold a ton of data, and with prices falling fast, they're a great bargain for backing up the stuff that matters. **Solid-state drives (SSDs)** use integrated circuits to store your data, making them far less vulnerable to damage than the platter drive that's probably supporting your PC.

The introduction of mega-capacity tetrabyte drives, meanwhile, means one little box can hold all the material on those hundreds of CDs and DVDs cluttering up your library, and then some.

Cloud storage: Cloud services are wildly popular for a reason: They're a great idea. As the [New York Times notes](#), "Storing your files in a distant commercial data center, encrypted and secure, increasingly makes more sense."

The desire for more secure backup is often the very thing that drives small-business owners and individuals to look to the cloud. Companies like [Carbonite](#), [Dropbox](#) and [Mozy](#) have made online storage simple, affordable and utterly reliable. And because they're offsite and super-secure, they're immune to threats that can devastate a physical backup system, like theft and fire.

The Logistics: Getting It from Here to There

Let's say you have some precious files and emails trapped on an ancient machine that's on its last legs. If you're imagining yourself chained to a desk chair, searching for and copying data over to your new PC, don't panic. Thanks to the latest technology, [data transfer](#) from old machine to new is safe, simple and affordable — and very quick if you [turn the goods over](#) to the experts.

If you do tap a tech expert for data transfer services, he or she will need to open the casing on your old PC and carefully remove the hard drive. The old hard drive is then plugged into a power source and connected to your new machine with a data transfer cable.

Software built into your new PC's operating system manages the actual transfer and, voilà, all of that old data is granted a second life on your new machine. In fact, data transfers can even salvage files that you might have thought were lost or damaged.

What Are You Waiting For?

As these terrific new ways to back up data grow even more popular, your opportunities to access those old data-storage forms are only going to shrink. (How many new PCs do you see with a floppy disk drive?) Don't wait for your outdated backup system to get any older or fall prey to a heat wave or water damage.

Whether you're talking about heirloom photos or business data, now is the time to act. Move the content of those disks or old PC someplace safe, and massage that dated DVD backup routine into one that's really going to work for you in the long term.

Computing on a Budget: Three Mobile-Security Tips

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Lock down your mobile devices without emptying your wallet. Here's our advice for improving mobile security.

In the scramble to control costs, small businesses shouldn't skimp on security. Protecting your technology, especially for [mobile devices](#), can prevent a range of tech issues in the future.

For creating a big-corporation security policy on a small-biz budget, follow these three simple tips:

Tip #1: Employ Endpoint Encryption

Think of encryption as the protections in your house. First, there's the front door and the back door, which are the main security barriers. But then you also lock the windows and perhaps keep a fireproof safe for important documents.

Similarly, encryption offers layer upon layer of security to make sure data stays safe. "Endpoint encryption" describes the controls employed at the user/endpoint level, which can include:

- **Full drive encryption** for a laptop, to make sure it's protected in case of theft or loss
- **File-folder encryption** to protect data on a shared system, especially if several people share an environment (e.g., a cloud-based workspace)
- **Email encryption** to protect messages and attachments

All of this encryption can work together, keeping a system secure and providing multiple levels of protection. Also, many of the tools and strategies are affordable, giving you robust security without busting your budget.

Tip #2: Take Advantage of Free Tools

Many security resources are available online. (As a first step, make sure a company is legit — some hackers use fake security programs to crack into a network or device.) Then, decide which of these options might be right for you:

- **System scanners** that identify potential security issues inside your network or computer
- **Spyware killers** that can cleanse a system
- **Attack-detection apps** that determine whether your company website is under attack or being monitored by hackers
- **End-user license agreement (EULA) scanners** that crawl through these documents on your computer to see if any hackers have tweaked a EULA to gain entry into your system

These resources are handy, tested and free or at least affordable (some shareware developers ask for a small donation). Take advantage of the breadth of tech savvy available to make your business more bulletproof.

Tip #3: Implement Budget-Friendly Employee Policies

Many companies are finding success with implementing a [BYOD](#) (bring your own device) policy, which allows employees to use their own smartphones, laptops and tablet computers at the office.

Because employees purchase the devices, the cost benefits are tough to beat. Where you should put your tech dollars, then, is into security measures that protect the network when these devices are logged on. Here are some tips:

- **Develop an employee [security policy](#)** that mandates encryption on all devices and prohibits installation of applications that might compromise security
- **Talk to employees** about the importance of password-protection strategies.
- **Conduct occasional device audits** to make sure they don't carry security risk.
- **Prohibit storage of company data** on the devices; often, employees can access files from cloud-based services without downloading and storing them locally.

With BYOD policies, free tools and endpoint encryption, you'll be on your way to having an efficient, affordable mobile-security program.

For a killer list of mobile apps, check out "[The Six Best Mobile Small-Business Apps for Road Warriors.](#)"