Backing up your device photos with Google Photos

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Introduction

Smartphones are the primary way that people take pictures these days. The ease of use combined with the ability to take and store thousands of photos make smartphone camera's a compelling choice. However, it also means that you have more photos to lose if your phone is lost or breaks. Every week I hear about people who have lost precious memories due to the loss of their device.

What is even more frustrating is that this can be easily avoided thanks to services that can back up your photos if your device is lost or breaks, you will have access to your photos.

Presenting Google Photo

Google Photo is a cloud-based photo sharing and storage service that was introduced in 2015. Users can upload photos and video of various sizes to Google's storage infrastructure.   Via

apps, you can use a computer or mobile device to upload and access the service. The service due to its "unlimited". (users get free, unlimited storage for photos up to 16 megapixels and videos up to 1080p resolution) amount of storage can also be used as a cloud-based backup for your photos.

Google photos will work on IOS, Android, Mac and PC devices so your photos can be backed up no matter what platform you are on.

Backup Best Practices

It is best to understand some best practices for backing up and protecting your data, in this case we are talking about photos and video but, these practices apply to any data you want to keep safe.

The 3-2-1 method of protecting your data.

3 copies
2 different locations
1 of them offsite.

3 copies – 3 copies of your data should be kept. 1 on the original device, the other 2 on backup devices.

2 different locations – Backups should be kept in two different physical locations. If you keep all 3 copies of your data in the same location and something happens at that location such as a fire or theft, then all 3 copies of the date could be lost.

1 of them offsite – As described above 1 copy of the data should be kept in a separate physical location. More and more this will be a cloud-based backup service, but even taking the 3rd copy away from the other 2 copies to a separate physical location is a good practice.

Keep it Simple Silly (K.I.S.S)
The more 'friction' you put into a task the less likely you will do it.
If you have to remember to do something and that tasks require several 'roadblocks' to complete it, it is likely you will put off doing the job. In the old days of backup, you would have to sit at your computer and insert and remove floppy disks or CDs to complete a backup. Most people would only do this once and then put off doing it again. Once backups to hard drives became common you could start the backup and then leave it to complete on its own.

Automate when possible.
If you can set a task to run without you having to manually start it then the task will run every time. We all have busy lives and it is easy to forget to do something if other thoughts are in our mind.

Find something that works for you.
Everyone is different. The same applies to your data (including precious picture and video memories) and backing them up. You should have a backup system that you understand and are comfortable to trust all your data with.

Setup on your mobile device

Now we will setup Google photos to back up your photos and videos, so first, we will setup your IOS (iPhone, iPad) or Android device. (phone or tablet).

In each case, you have to setup a Google account first. If you have a Andorid phone or tablet you will likely already have one. If you have a Gmail email account, then you have a Google account. If not go to https://accounts.google.com/SignUp and create an account. The page at https://support.google.com/mail/answer/56256?hl=en will give you help if you need it. Once you have a Google account setup go to the section that applies to your device. If you have several devices you will repeat the setup instructions for each one.

IOS Instructions

Get the Google Photos app from the Apple App store.
On your device, select the App store icon.
Once the App store launches select search and type "Google Photos"
Install the app as you would any other.

Start the Google Photos app.
The first time you start it you will be asked to sign into your Google account.
Sign in and continue
The next screen is the Backup and Sync option. This is where you setup your preferences on how you want your photos and video's uploaded to the cloud.

Turn on the "Back up & sync" toggle to the blue on position.

In most cases you will leave the "Use cellular data to back up" off as most people will not have an unlimited data plan. This means the app will only backup your data when you are connected via a Wi-Fi connection, such as at home or work. You can change this and all other settings at any time.

Select continue.

The next screen asks you to confirm upload size of the photo. You should choose "High Quality", selecting this option means that photos uploaded do not count towards the 15GB of storage Google gives you for free. In addition, you won't see a difference in quality of photos taken on your device as your device's camera takes photos at less than 16 megapixels (MP)

Select continue.

At this point (if you are securely connected to a Wi-Fi connection) the app will start uploading your devices photo library up to the cloud.   If you have a lot of photos this will take some time. You will see on the app, a spinning circle icon will appear on the lower right corner of each photo as it is uploaded to the cloud.

Once the photos have uploaded to the cloud you now have two copies of your photos. One on your device, the other in Google's cloud. You can access these photos from the Google Photo app or at photos.google.com on your web browser.

The Mac and Windows instructions include a way to copy these photos down to your computer so you have a 3rd copy always available to you.

Android Instructions

You get the Google Photos app from the Google Play store.
On your device, select the Google play store icon.
Select search and type "Google Photos"
Install the app as you would any other.

Start the Google Photos app.
The first time you start it you will be asked to sign into your Google account.
Sign in and continue

Click the 3 bars icon at the top left then select "Settings"

Turn on the "Back up & sync" toggle to the blue on position

Then select "Upload Size"

The next screen asks you to confirm upload size of the photo. You should choose "High Quality", selecting this option means that photos uploaded do not count towards the 15GB of storage Google gives you for free. In addition, you won't see a difference in quality of photos taken on your device as your device's camera takes photos at less then 16 megapixels (MP)

Under Backup Settings – Back up photos

In most cases, you will select Over Wi-Fi only as most people will not have an unlimited data plan. This means the app will only backup your data when you are connected via a Wi-Fi connection, such as at home or work. You can change this and all other settings at any time.

Select "Backup device folders" to make sure all your photo folders on your device are being backed up.

You can then press the left arrow on the upper left corner of the screen to return to the main app screen.

Photos not currently uploaded will have a small grey checkmark on them. This disappears once the photo has been uploaded to Google's cloud.

The Mac and Windows instructions include a way to copy these photos down to your computer so you have a 3rd copy always available to you.

Why put Google photos on your PC or Mac?

There are several reasons to install Google backup and sync on your computer.

1. A third copy of your photos in keeping with the 3-2-1 backup philosophy

   With using Google Photo's on our device, we now have a copy on the device and in the cloud. Best practice has us having 3 copies of our data. By putting a copy on the computer, we will have that 3rd copy.

2. A way to bring your photos into your local backup system.

   You are (hopefully) backing up your computer using the 3-2-1 philosophy. By bringing your backups into your computer, they too will be backed up in your local backup system for an extra measure of security.

3. Provide a easy way to make changes to your photos and photostream.

   By installing Google Backup and Sync to your computer this allows a local copy of your Google Drive including your photos to be copied down from Google's cloud. You can then edit and delete photos on the local device and those changes will sync to Google Photo

.

Mac and Windows Instructions

First, download the Google Backup and Sync app from
https://www.google.com/drive/download/backup-and-sync/

Next, launch the app, and follow the instructions.

Sign into your Google account and select which folders you'd like to continuously back up to Google Drive.

You will be asked to select upload size of the photo. You should choose "High Quality", selecting this option means that photos uploaded do not count towards the 15GB of storage Google gives you for free. In addition, you won't see a difference in quality of photos taken on your device as your device's camera takes photos at less them 16 megapixels (MP)

There's also a checkbox to Upload photos and videos to Google Photos. Use this option if you want all of the photos you have already have stored on your computer to show up on Google Photos.

Make sure that the "Show Google Drive photos & videos in your Photos library" setting is enabled in the Google Photos Settings page. If that is not there you may have to create the folder.

Go to drive.google.com

Log in and click on the gear icon in the upper right corner of the page:

This will open up a Menu where you will see Settings. Click on Settings:

Enable Create a Google Photos folder:

 When it is done you will now have 3 copies of your photos, the first in your phone or tablet, the second in Google's cloud and the third on your computer. Once your computer backup system backs them up you will then have an additional copy.

Managing your photo roll on your device with Google Photos.

Now that a copy of your photos are in Google Cloud you can delete the photos that are in your device's local photo app to recover space. Your copy of any photos deleted are still in Google cloud and will stay there unless you specifically delete the photo in any of the following areas.
- Google Photo app on the device.
- Photos.google.com on the web
- The copy of the photo on your local computer's drive if you have synced it there.

Android Devices

For Android devices, there is a function called "Delete Device (Phone)" This unsyncs the local device copy from the copy on Google Photos.

1. Open the Google Photos app on your device.
2. Select the photos you wish to delete from the device.
3. At the top right of the app, press on the "3 dots" menu icon.
4. Select **Delete Device Copy**.
5. The photos selected will be deleted from your phone, but the copy on Google Photos will still be saved.

IOS Devices

1. Open the IOS Photo's app on your device (not Google Photos)
2. Click Select on the upper right corner of the app.
3. Click each image you wish to delete. A blue checkmark will indicate it has been selected.
4. Click on the trashcan icon on the lower right.
5. The device will prompt you if you want to delete the photos.

Some Final thoughts.

It may be worth reviewing if your Internet Service Provider (ISP) has a cap for how much data you can transfer a month before incurring a cost. Many providers now have an unlimited plan included or for a few dollars more per month. It is possible you may go over this cap the first time you backup your photos to the cloud. The extra peace of mind to keep your data safe is worth this extra money.

Start making a habit to check that your backups are working from your mobile device and to your computer. Remember IOS users will have to start the Google Photos app for it to backup to the cloud.

You can find more backup tips at http://sclarkconsulting.ca

If you found this guide useful and feel like making a financial contribution, then please go to http://stuartclark.ca/books/ where you can do that. Thank you for your support.