

The first commercially available consumer SSD hit the market in 1991, held 20MB of data and sold for \$1,000.

by MARC SALTZMAN

You are likely aware of the Joni Mitchell lyric “you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.”

This phrase is certainly true when it comes to computer files. Think of all your irreplaceable photos and home movies, important documents, bookmarks and such.

The unexpected could happen to a laptop or desktop—e.g., a nasty virus, power surge, flood or fire, or theft—so it’s critical to create backups on a regular basis.

External drives that plug into your PC or Mac are a great idea for safeguarding your digital life, plus they’re handy for extending your computer’s storage (especially if you’re running low on space) and ideal for transferring files from one device to another.

Why SSD?

Along with the amount of storage offered by an external drive (see “Up in the cloud”), consumers have a choice between a traditional hard disk drive (HDD) and a solid-state drive (SSD).

Similar to the “flash” memory inside your smartphone or tablet, an SSD is a microchip that offers several benefits over a hard drive.

For one, an SSD is much faster than a hard drive, whether you’re transferring files to the external SSD or accessing files from it. This is partly because an SSD does not have any moving parts, as opposed to the spinning magnetic platters inside a hard drive.



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And because there are no moving parts in an SSD, it’s also much quieter than a hard drive. A solid-state drive is much smaller and lighter, too, and doesn’t require as much power to operate, which translates to much better battery life on a laptop.

SSDs have another major benefit over an HDD: They are much more rugged and less prone to damage, which is important if you carry the external SSD around with your laptop. It can withstand the bumps and knocks of life on the go.

When it comes to storage, the higher the number of gigabytes, the more programs and files your device can hold. That is, a 512-gigabyte (GB) drive can store twice as much data as a 256GB drive. A 1-terabyte drive (about 1,000GB) can hold twice as much as a 512GB drive. You get the idea.

Be sure to pick a drive that offers a little more storage than you think you’ll need, as you’ll eventually use it all. ■

Thanks for the memory

When backing up your computer, solid-state drives are the way to go



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COSTCO CONNECTION

The SanDisk 1TB SSD (Item 814713) is available in all Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

Up in the cloud

To further safeguard your data, it doesn’t hurt to also take advantage of free cloud services—for example, OneDrive,

iCloud, Google Drive or Dropbox—as they have some advantages. While you may get only 5 or so gigabytes of cloud storage for free, per account, it stores your files elsewhere

for safekeeping, and you can access accounts (with a password) from virtually any device connected to the internet, anywhere in the world.—MS