

Acronis True Image—An Image Backup Utility

Comments on and experience with using the Acronis True Image backup utility from Mike Morris, Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG), <http://www.frpcug.org>.

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The Acronis web site is: <http://www.acronis.com/>

The current version is Acronis True Image Home 2009, \$49.99 from the Acronis web site. It is also available from Tiger Direct (<http://www.tigerdirect.com/>). There may be a FRPCUG member discount available from Tiger Direct.

There is a free trial (time limited after download) available from the Acronis web site—especially recommended for Vista users.

If you buy, be sure to download **and print out** the User Guide.

There is a comparison of True Image v. 9 and Symantec's Ghost v. 10 on the "Gizmo's tech support alert" web site. The Gizmo web site describes itself as ". . . a community-based site staffed by volunteers ... no commercial affiliations"). To view the article, connect to <http://www.techsupportalert.com/drive-imaging-reviews.htm>:

"A regular Ghost user tries out True Image V9 and concludes that Ghost V10 has met its match."

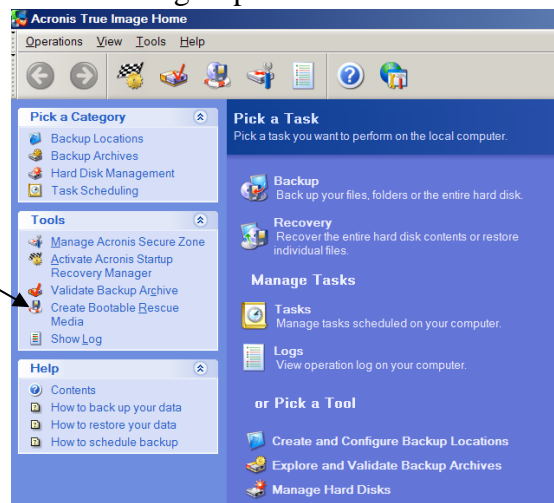
What is an "image backup"?

"Acronis True Image Home stores a sector-by-sector snapshot of the disk, which **includes the operating system, registry, drivers, software applications and data files, as well as system areas hidden from the user.** This procedure is called "creating a disk image," and the resulting backup archive is often called a disk/partition image."

The following information is based on True Image v. 10, a USB hard disk, and Windows XP/Pro SP3. Not all windows are included in the following steps.

Start by:

- Setting your CD player as first in the boot sequence (BIOS setting)
- Creating "Bootable Rescue Media"



Clean up the hard drive to be backed up:

- Make sure that the OS has the latest update
- Make sure that all security software has the latest updates
- Run security software scans (and remove/fix any problems)
- Run Windows disk utilities (Disk Cleanup, Disk Defragmenter)
- Set Restore Point (recommended)

Decide on backup type, or mode. The choices are:

- Full
- Incremental
- Differential

Recommended: Full

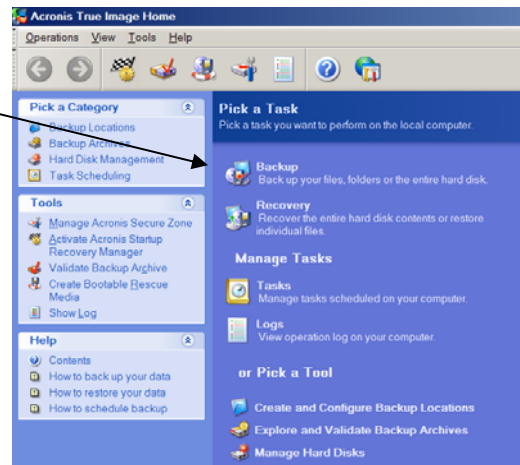
Decide on extent of backup. The choices are:

- Disk
- Partition
- Folder
- File

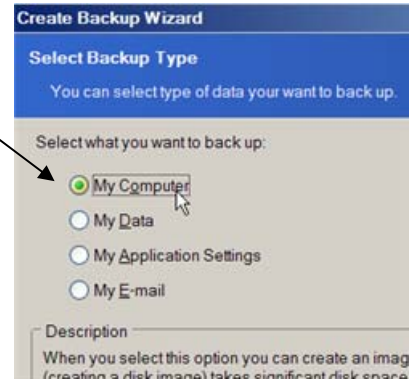
Recommended: Close all open applications (except, of course, True Image).

Connect USB hard drive. Make sure there is sufficient space on the external hard drive for the image.

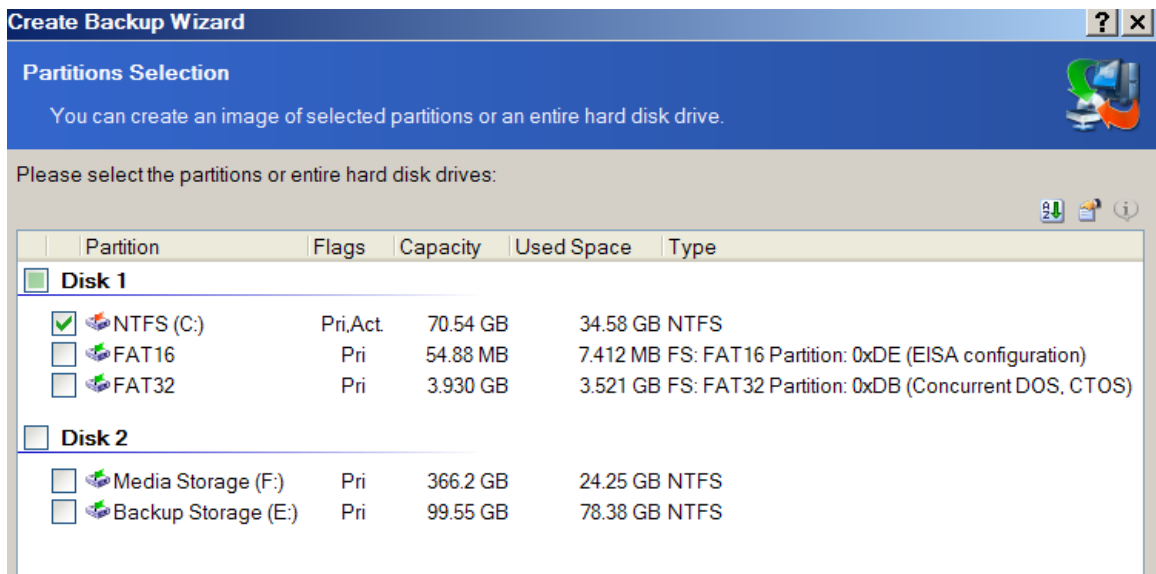
To start the backup, from the True Image main window, click on Backup.



When you reach the Select Backup Type window, select “My Computer” to include the OS and applications.



Selecting partition or disk:



Disk 1 is the “source” disk—the disk to be backed up. Disk 2 is the “destination” disk—the disk that will contain the image.

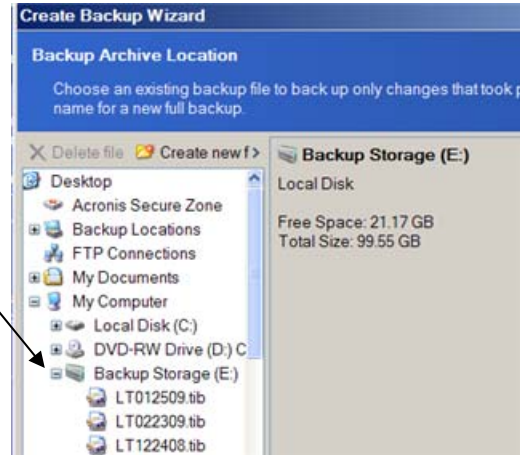
Note that on my computer, the “source” disk (Disk 1) has 3 partitions, 2 of which do not have drive letters. The larger of the two partitions without drive letters is probably used for the Windows “Restore” function.

If I want to backup the entire disk, I select all 3 partitions.

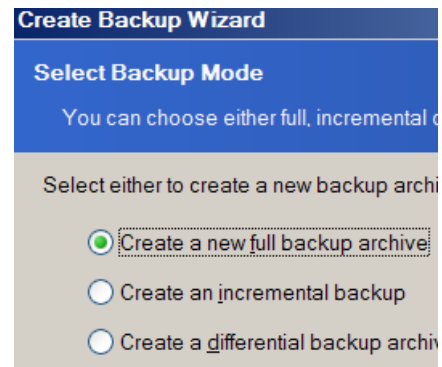
Note that this window is used only to select the disk or partition(s) to be backed up.

The next window, with its arcane name, Backup Archive Location, allows you to choose where to put the image:

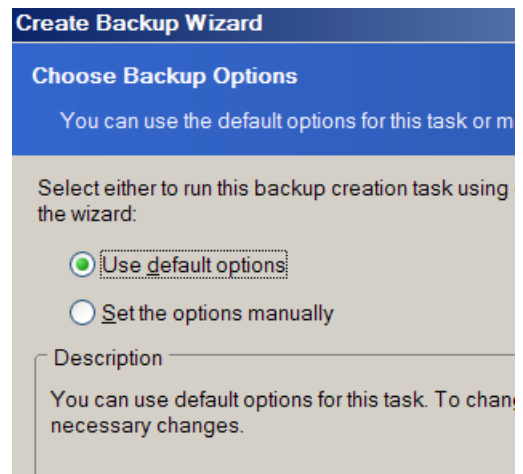
Note that I have used a file name with a date. Since I have 2 computers, I distinguish between the 2 computers with LT for laptop and DT for desktop.



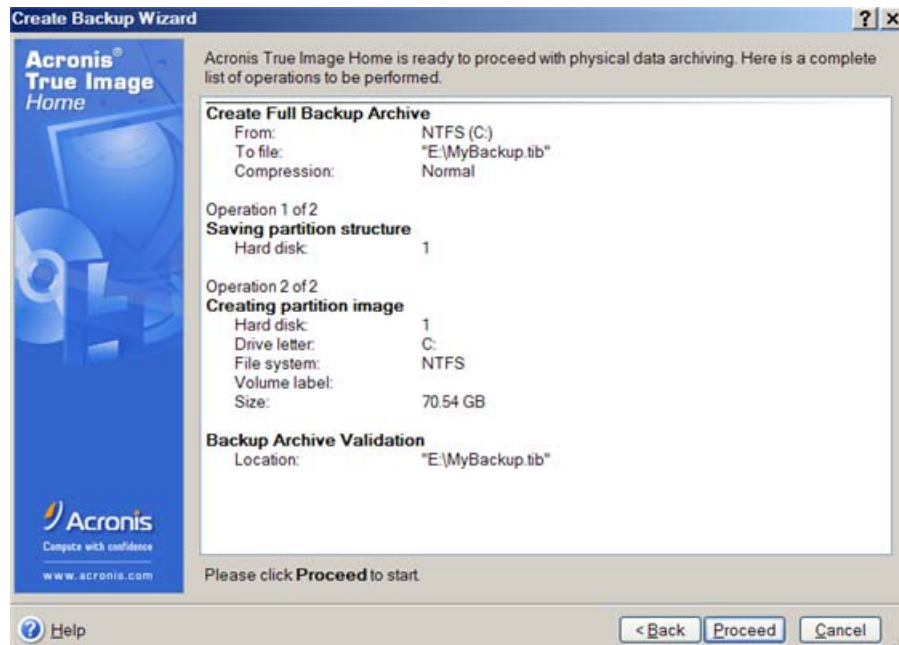
Select the desired Backup Mode:



Select the options (compression level, priority, notifications, etc.):



When you get to this window, you are ready to go. Make sure everything is set up the way you want it before you click on “Proceed.”



Notes:

- When the backup starts, the progress bar and the estimated time to completion are very pessimistic. On my laptop computer, it starts off in days, but the whole process takes somewhere between 1 and 2 hours, including verification of the backup.
- Twice, as I recall, the backup has failed to complete (I don't remember the error message). I solved this problem by cancelling the backup, running the Windows CHKDSK utility* with the “fix errors” choice selected, and then running the backup again. The problem in the past has been bad sectors on the hard drive.
- So far, I have not had to restore anything. On my desktop computer, I have a problem with Word 97, but I am reluctant to use one of the backup images that I have for that computer for two reasons:
 1. I don't know when the problem occurred, so I don't know if one of the backup images that I have is going to correct the problem. Note that to fix this problem (assuming I had a backup image with an uncorrupted version of Word, I would need to restore the entire C drive).
 2. It doesn't seem worth the effort. I if really want a working version of Word (which I don't), I should upgrade to a newer version. However, I have a current version of OpenOffice Writer on that computer, so I am not going to try and fix Word.

I haven't found it necessary—yet—to use the Restore function of True Image. There is one note from the user Guide regarding the Restore function that is worth remembering:

“Be careful! Disk letters in standalone Acronis True Image Home might sometimes differ from the way Windows identifies drives. For example, the D: drive identified in the standalone Acronis True Image might correspond to the E: drive in Windows.”

*Start/My Computer. Right click on Local Disk C, then click on Properties/Tools. Under the Error Checking panel, click on Check Now. You will probably have to reboot the computer to start the error checking process. This task could take several hours, depending on the size of the hard disk and how much information is on the disk.