

6 Ways Your Photos are in Danger

and how to keep them safe



A PUBLICATION FROM
FOREVER

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Introduction

If you're like most people, your photos are among your most meaningful possessions. Treasured holiday memories, your nervous steps down the aisle, emotional reminders of your child's first day on the school bus. Maybe even that burnt orange Polaroid of you and your best old friends—big glasses and frizzy hair everywhere.

And as embarrassing as some of those glamour shots might be, you wouldn't give them up for the world—would you?

Unfortunately, that's too often what happens. A lost cell phone, a crashed computer, a flooded basement, a house fire—it takes surprisingly little to risk, damage, or erase your most cherished, most intimate memories.

It gets worse. With advances in technology come new threats—many of which aren't quite as obvious as those we've listed above. Even with backups and cloud access, you're still at risk—and can in seconds lose everything.

The following chapters highlight some of the most common dangers to your photos, including many that aren't often discussed.

Chapter 1

Social Media

Social media has exploded, and in particular its many photo sharing features. Over 243,000 pictures are uploaded to Facebook every minute. But even that number doesn't tell the story. Across the whole social media landscape, about half a *billion* photos are uploaded each day. That's quite a burden on software not specifically designed for long-term storage.

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Social doesn't mean saved.

Social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram are great for *sharing* photos, but not for *saving* them. In order to offer these services for “free” they cut down on storage and bandwidth costs by automatically compressing the size and quality of each one of your photos.

It means they reduce photo quality.

These cost saving methods degrade the quality of your photos, which limits what you can do with them. Forget viewing these photos in high quality, or even including them in personal projects, such as videos and slide shows.



Don't be fooled by what you see on your phone or monitor. Even Facebook's "high quality" option significantly reduces photo quality.

It's only getting worse.

As technology improves, the screens we use get bigger and better. That's great news if you're looking at beautiful, high resolution photos. On the other hand, if you want to display pictures from Facebook, they're going to look *worse*. High resolution monitors these days equal or exceed print quality resolution, so images displayed at a lower resolution (again, all of those you'll find on social media) will surely fail to meet your expectations.

Simply put, social media platforms are not designed to be photo management solutions. Their only job is to share. They can't guarantee that your pictures will be around in a decade; they can't even guarantee they'll be around next summer. Further, even if you could rely on one of the giant social media companies to save your photos long-term, you wouldn't be able to do much with them. None of their existing software boasts tools sufficient for organizing your memories in the manner you'd like to see them.

Chapter 2

Smartphones

Over 1.5 *billion* pictures are captured on smartphones every day. Unfortunately, most of us don't take the time to back up or transfer those images on a regular basis. And most automatic backup solutions prove difficult to use simply and effectively.

Smartphone theft is on the rise.

Consumer Reports estimates that in 2013, over 4.5 million smartphones were lost or stolen in just the United States —twice as many as those stolen the year prior. Unfortunately, there are no signs to indicate this trend will slow down any time soon. It's a lucrative business for thieves, who can sell your device overseas on the blackmarket.

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Smartphones are great, but it's easier than we'd like to lose or damage them. If you're not careful, you could also lose photos.

Believe it or not, bathrooms are an even more ominous threat. Surveys show that almost 50% of smartphone accidents occur in the bathroom—which means you may be one restroom break away from flushing your whole life down the toilet!

Default backup options are only temporary.

Check the fine print. Yes, your phone provider offers an automatic cloud storage option, possibly at a high price. But it's unlikely to be the magic cure-all you would hope for. Read the contract closely—you're still responsible for backing up all of your stuff. Plus you could be allowing companies to access and use the content you upload to their services. Just because it's better than nothing doesn't mean it's the best option.

Chapter 3

“Free” Services

There's no such thing as a free lunch.

We've entered a new era in commerce, one that's changed everyday life dramatically. Companies everywhere are rushing west to the Silicon Valley—a sequel to the Gold Rush is underway. But instead of panning for gold and silver, these organizations are cashing in on a new precious material: you. And yes, we're talking about the biggest names, like Google and Yahoo.

Here's the truth: if a company offers you an elaborate product for “free,” realize it will be making its money in some other way. Most likely, this ‘other way’ is the sale of your personal information to third-party advertisers. It is common practice among companies who conduct business principally online. Remember: if you're not paying for a product, you *are* the product. Did you really consent to this?

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The more companies know about you, the easier they can target ads and other messaging to you specifically.

You could easily lose your data.

Some “free” providers even take ownership of your photos, nullifying your rights to your own digital property. To make matters worse, they don’t guarantee permanence, and claim no responsibility for ensuring that your photos will be there for you in the future.

It sounds outrageous, but sometimes companies shut down or change direction without warning—never offering their customers a chance to preserve their content. Don’t allow this to happen to you and your memories. Be discerning about which companies you trust with your photos.

Chapter 4

Temporary Cloud Storage

Popular cloud storage services don't always guarantee permanence.

Paid storage services, such as those provided by Dropbox and Sugarsync, are surely better options. But even they fail to offer the promise of permanent storage. In fact, their respective terms of service absolve their corporate offices of any and all responsibility for your data. If your memories are compromised, there's nothing you can do. Are you *really* saving your data?



Your precious family memories could disappear as quickly and completely as footprints in sand.

Even the giants aren't always reliable.

You might be thinking Dropbox or Google are too big to be unreliable. Surely you don't *really* have to worry that they will fold or change directions. But big doesn't necessarily mean consistent. These companies *regularly* issue sweeping updates to their terms of service. Can you afford to take a chance with your most precious moments?

We say none of this to suggest you should stop using Dropbox. We simply advise you to be careful. These giants *cannot* be your only trusted backup.

Consider the much-publicized story of a Dropbox customer who lost over 8,000 photos in an instant. As her email to customer support shows, things can go terribly wrong, terribly quickly:

*It is much worse than I thought, *in total 8345 files were deleted*, mainly my photos a videos [sic].... This is an absolute disaster, I don't have any other backup of these files, Dropbox was supposed to be the backup.*

<https://medium.com/@jan.curn/how-bug-in-dropbox-permanently-deleted-my-8000-photos-cb7dcf13647b>

After working with customer service, they were only able to recover about 1,000 of those photos. Family photos and similar data are irreplaceable. Don't put them at risk, needlessly, by relying exclusively on cloud storage companies, even the big ones. They're only a temporary fix.

“This is an absolute disaster, I don't have any other backup of these files, Dropbox was supposed to be the backup.”

Chapter 5

Home Computers

(+ Backup Hard Drives)

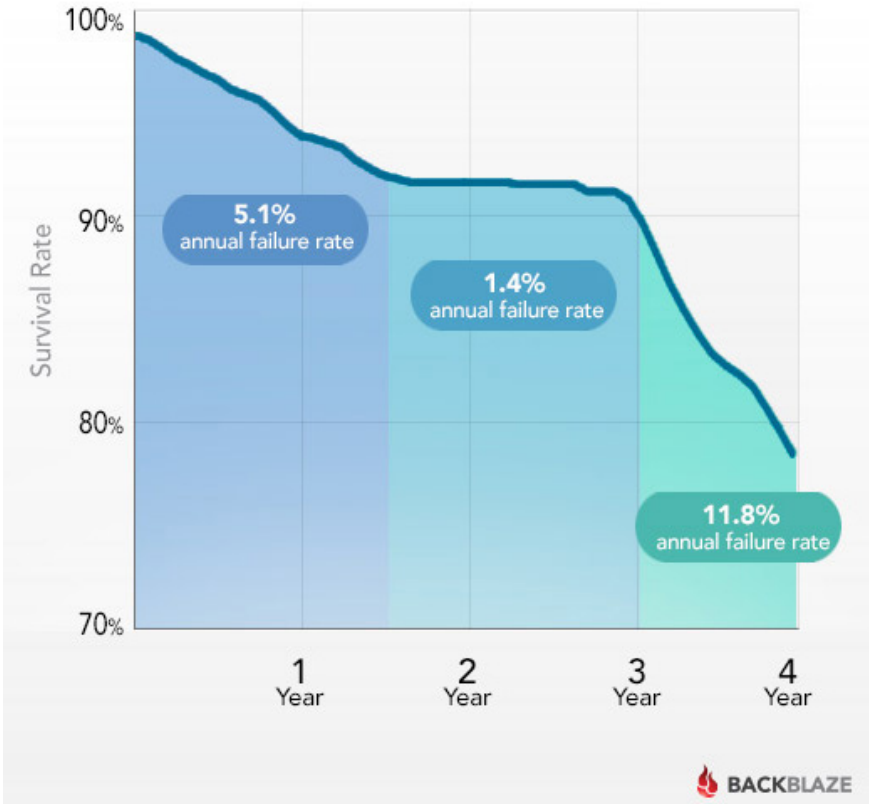
Storing photos “in the cloud” may feel nebulous and uncertain, but, alternatively, physical devices (including DVDs and hard drives) are actually *expected* to fail. Online storage takes the limited lifespan of hardware into account by utilizing a huge number of interconnected physical devices and swapping them out when one fails. Unfortunately it’s a little more difficult for us individuals to deal with device failures.

But they *will* fail. In just six months, the typical DVD will begin to lose some of its data. Hard drives are expected to fail after three years, and flash drives rarely make it to age six. As shown in the image on the next page, a study performed by BackBlaze confirms that the risk of failure and data loss in hard drives is over 5% in the first 18 months. After 36 months, the annual failure rate increases to 12%.

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Drives Have 3 Distinct Failure Rates

Hard Drive Survival Rates - Chart 1



After three years, the likelihood that your hard drive will continue to function as expected drastically decreases.

Duplicates aren't enough.

Owning multiple backups is a good idea, but if they're located in the same place (like, for instance, your home), you're increasing dramatically the likelihood of data loss. If you're hit by a natural disaster, a fire, or a flood, you could lose everything. It may seem unlikely, but no one expects those kinds of events. Better to be prepared and have off-site backups like cloud storage than to keep everything at home—and merely hope for the best.

They're not perfect, but keep using them!

Be certain to keep copies of your data locally. Otherwise, you'll retain no access to your photos, videos, and documents without both a power source and internet signal. Besides, you can't have too many backups. It's a great idea to have a storage option that doesn't depend on the continued existence of a company—even a major one. Even if the company that made your hard drive goes out of business, you'll hold on to your data. But avoid using CDs and DVDs for backups. Hard drives and flash drives have much more robust lifespans.

Chapter 6

Albums & Attics

Most memories these days are captured and stored digitally, but many of us persist in keeping a large portion of our personal data in photo albums, scrapbooks and boxes in the attic. While natural disasters and fires certainly pose a one-time risk, consider the more gradual (and much more likely) threats of heat, mildew, and mold.



Your precious family memories could be deteriorating slowly—and without checking, you cannot know for sure.

They're not meant to last.

Unfortunately, most of the things you have stuffed away in boxes or albums aren't designed to last forever. Newspaper clippings, for instance, are particularly fragile, thanks entirely to their composition. Even if you've taken the steps necessary to ensure their wellbeing, you're still at risk. Lamination, believe it or not, will erode over time—and further, it provides no shield from sunlight, which will ultimately fade news ink completely. Someday, potentially soon, you'll be left with a pile of brittle yellow slips of paper—showing nothing!

Sometimes it's not even your fault. If, for example, your old Polaroid or dark-room photographs were developed with chemical compounds just *slightly* out of proportion, they will eventually corrode to blank. In fact, they could be in the process of corroding now. Old documents, photos, and slides aren't suited for changes in temperature. And unless all of it is properly stored inside 100% acid-free albums and adhesives, your data is suffering from chemical attrition.

Preserve them before it's too late.

If you're over the age of thirty, odds are the majority of your memories are saved and stored in all manner of physical data: photographs, video tapes, and journal entries

If your old Polaroid or dark-room photographs were developed with chemical compounds just *slightly* out of proportion, they will eventually corrode to blank.

—to name a few. Transitioning these forms to the digital space will not only ensure their long-term survival, but will allow you to access them with ease.

Luckily, you don't have to worry about doing it on your own. At Forever, we have our own high-quality conversion services as well as a network of partners to help. Call 1-888-FOREVER (1-888-367-3837) if you have questions or want to get started. Our services team is happy to help you find the best solution.

Chapter 7

What Now?

The photos we save are reminders of life's most cherished moments. They tell our stories of our family, our relationships, our culture, our faith, and especially our love. They are inexpressibly important, not just for us but for future generations. They should be protected.



Precious moment between a grandfather and his granddaughter.
(Digitized slide from Ellie Gutilla)

Taking pictures is easy. The challenge is deciding what to do with those pictures after the flash goes off. None of the many options we've addressed are sufficient to preserve and safeguard those photos long-term.

We're not urging you to outrage or insisting you drop your existing storage providers. Again, the more layers your storage plan has, the better. But you also need easy access to everything in one place, preferably with a company committed to backing it up for you several times over.

Fortunately, there is a new way to save and share your precious photos and other memories—and for hundreds of years. And that's with permanent online storage.

Permanent Online Storage

Forever.com provides a new kind of online storage that removes the risks and dangers associated with today's other options.

Primary features and benefits of a permanent membership at Forever.com include:

Permanence

You will always be the owner of your digital property, and it's guaranteed to be there for your lifetime, plus 100 years.

Trust

Forever, Inc. is a high integrity company (like leading life insurance providers) that is committed to professionally managing your digital property over the long term.

Privacy & Security

Your personal information will never be sold to others and is only viewable by those whom you trust.

Automatic Protection

Cell phone photos can be uploaded automatically, where they will be triple backed up and encrypted.

Ease of Use

Web and award-winning mobile apps make the organization of your life's moments fun and easy.

Cost Effective

Your memories can be protected permanently for about the price of one cup of coffee per month.

Forever.com's permanent members gain a private residence in cyberspace that they own, where their photos are secure, private, backed up and shared only with those they trust.

You can try for free, no credit card required, or become a permanent member. Either way, you'll be taking the first step in ensuring your memories are safe—always. Your family is counting on you. Learn more or sign up today!



Thanks for checking out our book!

Have any feedback? Send us an email at forever@forever.com, we'd love to hear from you.