

Bits of Bytes

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO

Volume XLV

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Issue 8



Created by ChatGPT

Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,
P*PCompAS Secretary

President Paul Godfrey started the membership meeting at 9:09 am. The meeting minutes from last month were approved. David George made coffee, and Greg Lenihan brought doughnuts.

OFFICER REPORTS

Treasurer Toni Logan said we had \$1551.54 in savings, \$161.47 in checking, for a total of \$1713.01. Toni paid the church to rent our room for June and July through her own account. She moved \$75 to checking to eventually pay herself back. Starting 1 August, the church will get an automatic rent payment. She set up a recurring deposit from savings to checking to handle the payments. Also, our Colorado non-profit fee went up from \$10 to \$25 and is paid (was due in July).

Membership Chair Ann Titus was online, but could not get her Zoom audio to work.

Librarian Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

Newsletter editor Greg Lenihan said the deadline for the August newsletter was 19 July.

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 2 August 2025

No presentation topic has been announced.

Discord Admin John Pearce says Greg Lenihan is active on the server along with a few others.

Hospitality Chair Toni Logan had nothing to report.

APCUG Rep/Webmaster Joe Nuvolini had nothing to report.

BOD Chair John Pearce had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Paul Godfrey assumed nothing had been done with cloud storage for the club. Greg Lenihan mentioned that if we had big files (like meeting videos), they could be posted to a YouTube account with the link posted on Discord. John Pearce was concerned that there are some things we don't want others outside the club to see or hear unless the videos get edited.

NEW BUSINESS

John Pearce brought in a micro-USB cable for our Bluetooth speaker because the old one was bad. The new cable is working well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next social breakfast meeting will be on Saturday, 19 July, at the Golden Corral, starting at 8:00 am.

Our next membership meeting is on Saturday, 2 August 2025.

AROUND THE ROOM

John Pearce watched an APCUG Wednesday Workshop about two months ago about the care and feeding of your laptop

battery. The presenter, John Krout, developed a script that notifies you when your battery charge drops below 20% or above 80%. John Pearce made some suggestions that got incorporated, and has been in contact with John Krout. John Pearce is waiting for the updated version to be released. John appreciates the reminder to charge his laptop when the charge is low. Toni Logan says she leaves her laptop plugged in. With Lithium-ion batteries, this isn't a good thing to do because of overheating. Even leaving a charger plugged into power (but not your computer) draws a phantom load, though it may not be much.

David George is thinking of upgrading his iPhone 8 to an iPhone 16 and asked if anyone had experience with the latest. No one had an iPhone 16.

Toni Logan says that suddenly her Epson printer will not connect to wi-fi. It's not in settings. It has happened to John Pearce before and the way he solved it was using

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Hospitality: Antoinette Logan
Programs: Cary Quinn
Publicity: Vacant
Nominating: Vacant

Board of Directors

John Pearce
Bob Logan
David George
Greg Lenihan
Joe Nuvolini



President Paul Godfrey presiding over the July membership meeting. A few members are in the background attending via Zoom.



Members physically attending the July 2025 meeting.



Digerati at the July breakfast

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P*PCompAS welcomes any comments, letters, or articles from members and non-members alike. Please send any articles to the editor (see last page for address). The editor reserves the right to reject, postpone, or edit for space, style, grammar, and clarity of any material submitted.

These 7 Free Tools Can Help You Avoid Malicious Links to Stay Safe

by Joy Okumoko, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com)

Original article at <https://www.howtogeek.com/free-tools-to-help-you-identify-and-avoid-malicious-links/>

How safe is this URL? That's the question you should be asking before clicking on random links. A friend of mine on X shared how she learned this lesson the hard way after getting locked out of her Snapchat account. Don't make the same mistake. Here are seven of the best free URL checkers that'll help protect you from malicious links online.

7 – VirusTotal Link Checker



Despite its name, the VirusTotal Link Checker is one of the best URL checkers I use to vet suspicious links in my texts, inbox, and social media DMs. It's like the Swiss Army knife of URL scanners. It lets you scan and analyze links, files, and even search file hashes, among other things.

Simple and easy to use, it has separate tabs for scanning links, files, and searching for different threats. It uses AI technology to scan links and reference current databases of known threats.

Its scan report is more comprehensive than other URL checkers I've used. It includes a safety score and results from dozens of other cybersecurity vendors. It's like getting a second, third, and fourth opinion, all at once. It also shares its findings with the wider security community.

To scan a URL:

- Go to [VirusTotal Link Checker](https://www.virustotal.com)
- Click on the **URL** tab
- Enter or paste the URL
- Click **Search** and await the result

To scan a file while still on the Virus Total site:

- Click on the **File** tab
- Click **Choose file** (it supports files of up to 650 MB)
- Click **Confirm upload**, and wait for the result. Note that you can only scan one file at a time.

To search hashes, domains, IPs, or URLs:

- Click the **Search** tab
- Enter the details
- Click **Search**, and wait for the result

If you want it to automatically scan links on the websites you visit, click on the automate button or scroll down to the bottom of the page to access the Virus Total URL checker API.

6– NordVPN Link Checker



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Meeting Minutes (Cont. from page 1)

Ethernet over Powerline to his Brother printer. Toni's printer does not have a USB port to connect to a computer.

Greg Lenihan said Microsoft announced three ways to continue with Windows 10 after October 14th. There is a \$30 fee, using OneDrive for backup, or cashing in 1000 reward points. He Googled how to find out if he had any reward

points and discovered he had 1200, which should allow him to continue Windows 10 on his non-upgradeable computer for another year. Cary Quinn says he plans to use the OneDrive backup method.

Joe Nuvolini said it appeared his Comcast IP address was "hijacked" for the second time. He could not send out e-mail. He was advised to unplug the power on his modem for a couple hours (or a day) to get a new IP address.

Meanwhile in August, Joe is getting a pacemaker.

PRESENTATION

We watched half an APCUG video called "How/Where Do I Report Fraud?" presented by Judy Tylour. We then watched an APCUG video titled "Working Together to Prevent Fraud" by Geme de las Heras. ☺

Malicious Links (Cont. from page 3)

Powered by the popular NordVPN service, this robust link checker scans URLs and tells you whether a site is safe to visit or not. It uses machine learning to scan a massive database of known threats, protecting you and your devices from [fake websites](#), malware, botnets, and [phishing attacks](#).

What I especially like is that you can use it to check links from texts, social media DMs, emails—you name it. And it's completely free. Similar to the VirusTotal URL Checker, it also doubles as a file checker, letting you scan documents, images, audio, and video files up to 50 MB for viruses and malware before or after downloading them. The interface is super easy to use, though you can only scan one link or file at a time.

To scan a link:

- Head to [NordVPN Link Checker](#)
- Copy the suspicious link (do not click it!)
- Paste it in the box, click **Analyze**, and wait for the result

To scan a file:

- Go to [NordVPN File Checker](#)
- Click **Add file**, then hit **Analyze**
- Wait a few moments for the result

If you want to take it a step further, check out the paid plan that includes automatic link scanning for every website you or your team members visit.

5– Bitdefender Link Checker



The Bitdefender Link Checker is another solid URL detector that I turn to when I really want to be certain whether a link is legitimate or not. Like the other URL checkers, it uses machine learning to scan an up-to-date database of reported threats, protecting you from malware, phishing attacks, and [fraudulent sites](#).

It gives you peace of mind whether you're chatting on WhatsApp or searching for information

online. And yes, it's free too. The interface is clean and user-friendly, pretty much anyone can figure it out. However, unlike VirusTotal and NordVPN's link checkers, it doesn't support file checking, at least not yet.

To scan a link:

- Visit [Bitdefender Link Checker](#)
- Add the link or paste it from your clipboard
- Click **Check URL** and wait for the result

Within seconds, you'll know whether the link is safe or not. And if you want even more automated protection, you can try their pro version free for 30 days to see if it's a fit.

4– IPVanish Link Checker



Not a fan of Virus Total, NordVPN, and Bitdefender link checkers? No worries. You'll probably like the IPVanish Link Checker. What makes IPVanish stand out is that it's available as a standalone app on iOS, Android, Mac, and Windows. You can also use it directly in your browser, which gives you more flexibility.

It also uses machine learning to scan URLs, check webpages for viruses and malware, and protect you against new threats (zero-day threats). Its user interface is decent, though not quite as polished as VirusTotal, NordVPN, or Bitdefender's. It doesn't support file checking either, but it does a superb job of scanning links.

To scan a URL in your browser:

- Go to [IPVanish Link Checker](#)
- Enter or paste the URL and click **Check link**
- Wait for the result

To scan a URL using the app:

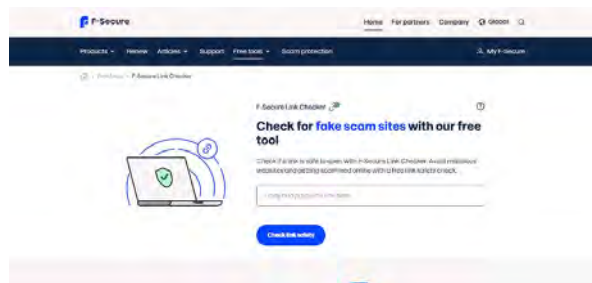
- Download the IPVanish app (available for [iOS](#), [Android](#), [Mac](#), and [Windows](#))
- Go to **Security Tools** (bottom tab on mobile, left side menu on desktop)

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Malicious Links (Cont. from page 4)

- Enter or paste the URL in the link checker
- Click **Check URL** and wait for the result

One of the things I also like about IPVanish is that it gives you a fairly detailed progress report, and includes a screenshot of the site. It takes a few extra seconds, but I don't mind. You can upgrade to the pro version if you want automatic protection for sites you visit.

3– F-Secure Link Checker

Another reliable and free tool I use to check if a link is truly safe and trustworthy is the F-Secure Link Checker. It also has a pro version that scans sites automatically. The interface is simple and easy to use. The results are color-coded and detailed, clearly showing you the risks of visiting certain sites.

This free tool scans URLs in text messages, chats, and emails to see if they're phishing risks or contain malicious links. It uses advanced AI algorithms to scan URLs for known threats that especially target banking and online retail services. That does not exempt other uses though.

To use it:

- Go to [F-Secure Link Checker](#)
- Copy and paste the URL
- Click **Check link safety**
- Check the I'm not a bot box and wait for the results

Of all the URL checkers on this list, I find this one to be kind of like that overly cautious aunt who warns you about everything and everyone. But hey, you can't be too careful online these days, can you?

2– EasyDMARC Link Checker

The EasyDMARC Link Checker is another one of my favorite URL checker tools for identifying and avoiding malicious sites. While the other free link checkers only let you check one link at a time, it lets you scan multiple URLs at once. That's a huge time-saver if you're checking several links.

However, you need to enter the full URL including its path (like <https://example.com/path> or <https://www.howtogeek.com/category/desktop/>). If you scan multiple links at once, it'll break down the report URL by URL.

Like the other URL checkers, it also scans URLs in text messages, emails, and webpages for known threats. The layout is simple, and I love how it keeps a running list of recently checked URLs with a clear status next to each. You may even run a **Ctrl+ F** search to see if your URL has been previously searched.

To check a URL:

- Visit [EasyDMARC Phishing Link Checker](#)
- Enter or paste the full URLs with their paths
- Check the I'm not a robot box
- Click **Check**, then scroll down for the results

If you own a business, you can even request access to their link checker API to help safeguard your team against cybercriminals who are on the prowl.

1– Bitly Link Checker

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9 Good Reasons to Try Dual Monitors

By Bob Rankin, <http://askbobrankin.com>, published through the APCUG

An AskBob reader says: "I am considering upgrading to dual monitors because my 17-inch monitor seems to be shrinking. Sometimes it seems like I spend more time scrolling and tabbing between programs than on actual work. But still not sure... should I upgrade to a big 30-inch monitor, or go with a dual monitor setup?" Here's my advice on dual monitor upgrades...

Try Dual Monitors For Increased Productivity

If you've ever wished for a bigger computer screen, here's an even better idea. Get two! Use a dual monitor (or multi monitor) setup to extend your desktop across two or more screens. Windows, Mac and Linux computers have the ability to simulate one BIG screen using a dual or multi monitor configuration. Adding a second monitor will be cheaper than upgrading to a super-size screen, and there are other advantages too.

I've used two monitors on my PC for many years. Years ago, I got a pair of 22-inch monitors with a new computer. When they finally died (within two days of each other) I replaced them with dual 24-inch flat-panel monitors and I love it. I set both monitors on my desk, side by side, and a bit of software magic creates the illusion of one giant screen. I can open a website on one screen, and a word processor on the other, then copy and paste from one screen to another. I

can drag a window from one screen to the other, or even open a spreadsheet and stretch it A-L-L T-H-E W-A-Y across the full width of both screens if I want.



One of my AskBob readers concurs: "I added a second monitor to my desktop about a year ago on a whim: A friend upgraded to a larger monitor and gave me his old one. I thought, 'Let's see what it's like to have two monitors!' IT IS FANTASTIC - THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE! I can't imagine ever going back to one."

Personally, I find that all the extra desktop space makes me much more productive and greatly enhances the fun of computing. When I am forced to use a laptop or desktop computer that has a single screen, I notice the limitations right away, as the extra scrolling and alt-tabbing becomes tedious. Others have told me that after ten minutes of using a dual monitor setup, they can't imagine living without it.

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Malicious Links (Cont. from page 5)

Shortened links like Bitly links can be quite tricky to deal with. Plus, scammers can use them to mask malicious links for people to click without realizing. That's why I use Bitly Link Checker to unmask them first.

Although it doesn't directly tell you if the link is safe, it does reveal the original URL, which you can then run through any of the other URL scanners we've talked about.

This way, you can stay safe whether you're dealing with a shortened Bitly link or a regular URL. The interface is super simple and works with any Bitly link you find in a text, email, or social media message.

Here's how to use it:

- Go to [Bitly Link Checker](#)
- Enter the shortened Bitly link (they all start with *bit.ly*)
- Click **Check it**. A new tab will open
- Select and copy the Destination URL (don't click it!)
- Paste it into your preferred link checker to get the safety report

Pro tip: All the featured link checkers let you report false flags if you feel a link you trust or own is wrongly labeled as malicious. The link to report scan results is always on the results page. Reporting false flags helps to improve link checker accuracy over time.

Personally, I like to run every suspicious link through two or more link checkers or my trusty Virus Total Link Checker. If more than one tool flags it, that's a huge red flag.

And here's another important tip: if a friend sends you an unexpected link out of the blues, give them a quick call to confirm. You never know, their account might've been hacked. All it takes is one malicious link to compromise your personal information, lock you out of your accounts, or install malware on your device. These free tools are your first line of defense. Start using them. ☺

*Dual Monitors (Cont. from page 6)***Here are NINE good reasons to have dual monitors:**

1. Published studies indicate that having a dual monitor in a workplace setting can increase productivity by 20 to 50 percent. For example, if you're a computer programmer, it should be obvious that having your source code on one side and your program on the other side of a dual monitor display would be very helpful.
2. Real multi-tasking requires enough screen space to keep two or more apps in full view simultaneously. If you have ever tried to size and align windows on a single monitor, you'll appreciate the ability to have several apps fully open at the same time. Customer service reps and web designers are additional examples of people that would benefit from dual monitors.
3. Cutting and pasting between documents is much easier when you don't have to alt-tab between them and scroll up or down so much. If you create newsletters or PowerPoint presentations, you'll identify with this.
4. Picture and video editing is a whole new experience with dual monitors. You can have all of your editing tools on one screen while you work on the project in the other. You can compare before and after views of the same work, or supersize panoramic pictures.
5. Comparing products is easier when you have dual monitors. You can show two cameras' specs side by side in separate browser windows, for example.
6. Video and gaming take on a whole new dimension with dual monitors. You can view much more of a virtual world and see bad guys coming from a distance. Some gamers like to have Skype or another chat app open on a second screen.
7. Similarly, dual monitors can help with video conferencing. During Zoom or Microsoft Teams calls, it's much easier to stay engaged when your meeting is on one screen and your notes, agenda, or browser are on the other. No more frantic window shuffling while someone's talking.
8. Windows 10 and 11 offer [multi-monitor features](#), such as the ability to use different backgrounds on each monitor, span multiple screens with your background image, and multiple taskbars.
9. Dual screens are ideal for traders, analysts and genealogy buffs. Finance professionals and data analysts love dual monitors

because they allow you to view multiple data streams, live charts, and reports simultaneously. One friend of mine keeps his Family Tree genealogy program open on one screen, with his browser and word processor on the other.

Hardware Required For a Dual Monitor Configuration

That was nine reasons, and I'm sure I could list more if I rubbed a few brain cells together. Despite all that, a Microsoft study showed that less than 15 percent of all PC users have a multiple monitor configuration. But now that you know all of the benefits, let's move on to the actual nuts and bolts of adding a second screen, to make your dual monitor dreams come true.

Windows 7/8/10/11, Mac OS and Linux all have built-in support for dual monitors. Setting up dual monitors takes about five minutes. But first, you need to make sure you have the right hardware. Almost all laptops have a VGA, DVI, HDMI or DisplayPort connector where you can plug in a secondary monitor. If you have a spare monitor, and the video cable required to connect it, that's all you'll need. If your video cable has a different connector than your laptop, you can buy an adapter to make ends meet.

On a desktop, you will need two video connectors on your computer, matching connectors on the two monitors, and of course appropriate cables. Some desktops come with two video ports, but if you have only one, you can add a second video adapter, or swap yours for a dual-port model. Adding or swapping a video adapter sounds geeky, but it's actually a pretty easy upgrade. After popping the hood on your system unit, the video adapter simply plugs into a slot on the motherboard. If you know how to use a screwdriver, you can do this.

Some computers, however, simply lack the capacity for internal hardware upgrades. In these unfortunate cases, there are ways to get around this limitation, such as the Matrox Graphics [DualHead2Go](#), which functions almost identically to a standard video card, yet is actually an external device that makes use of your existing video out port. With DualHead2Go, you can add an additional display to your PC or Mac desktop, or another two monitors to a laptop.

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Why Do You Have Two Different Backup Program Recommendations? I'd have even more recommendations if I had more time.

By Leo A. Notenboom, <https://newsletter.askleo.com/>; published under the Creative Commons License

I want to explain why I have more than one recommendation for a backup program. Talking about one doesn't mean I've stopped recommending the other(s).



Question: You're talking about {Macrium Reflect | EaseUS Todo}. Do you no longer recommend

{EaseUS Todo | Macrium Reflect}? Why? What changed?

This comes up often enough that I want to address it and explain why. It's simple:

- I recommend Macrium Reflect.
- I recommend EaseUS Todo.

These two things can both be true at the same time.

In Short

Backup program recommendations

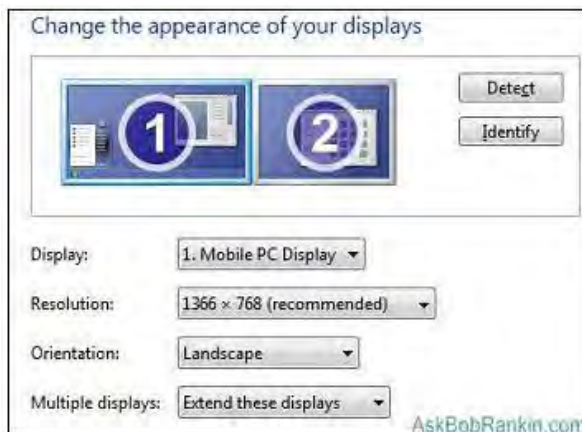
I recommend both Macrium Reflect and EaseUS Todo because they meet my requirements for a backup program. They're different, but both are good. Pick the one that works best for you. I don't care which tool you use as long as you back up.

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Dual Monitors (Cont. from page 7)

How to Connect a Second Monitor

On Mac OS X and most Windows computers, your second monitor should be automatically recognized and enabled. Connect your second monitor to the computer and power it on. On Windows 10 or 11, Select Start > Settings > System > Display. Your PC should automatically detect your monitors and show your desktop. In the Multiple displays section, select an option from the list to determine how your desktop will display across your screens.



“Duplicate these displays” shows the same display on both screens. This is handy when monitoring a presentation on a laptop while it is displayed on second, larger screen. “Extend these displays” makes one big screen out of the dual monitors. You can

actually drag objects across the boundaries of the two monitors. This is the setting that most people use, and the one I recommend. “Show desktop only on 1” or “Show desktop only on 2” disables one of the monitors.

Once you've selected what you see on your displays, select **Keep changes**. Adjust the screen resolution of the monitors as desired, and you're done.

Some Monitor Upgrade Options

Prices have dropped quite a bit since I paid about \$200 each for my last set of monitors. The [Dell 24-inch Monitor with built-in speaker](#) is just \$119. It has HDMI ports, and an ultra-thin bezel that's great for a multi-monitor set-up. The stand has adjustable height, tilt and rotation.

If you want to start fresh with a matching set of monitors, consider this dual pack of [Kado 22-inch HDMI Monitors](#) with built-in speakers. Currently offered as Prime-Day Deal for \$111.89. Yes, that's the price for the set. There's also a 3-pack for \$183.89 that will provide an immersive viewing experience for gamers.

Dual monitors are not for everyone. They take up more desk space, obviously. If you are a programmer, graphic artist, website designer, author, editor, proofreader, support technician, gamer or power user, dual monitors will boost your productivity and definitely look cool on your desk. If you're just an every-day ordinary computer user, I think you'll find there are benefits you didn't expect. ☺

Two Backup Programs (Cont. from page 8)

My requirements

Both programs meet my requirements for securely and completely backing up your machine.

My requirements? A good [backup](#) program is able to:

- Create full-disk image backups.
- Create incremental image backups.
- Restore to an empty [hard disk](#) (aka “[bare metal](#)” restore).
- Extract single files from backup images.
- Schedule backups to happen automatically.

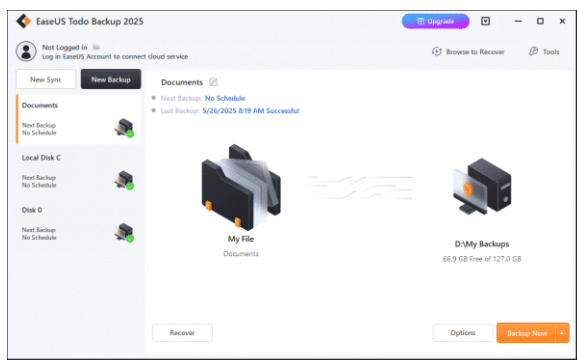
There are bonus features that I could add to the list (for example, I *love* Image Guardian in Reflect and Security Zone and Backup Protection in Todo), but that’s my bare minimum.

There’s no one-size-fits-all solution

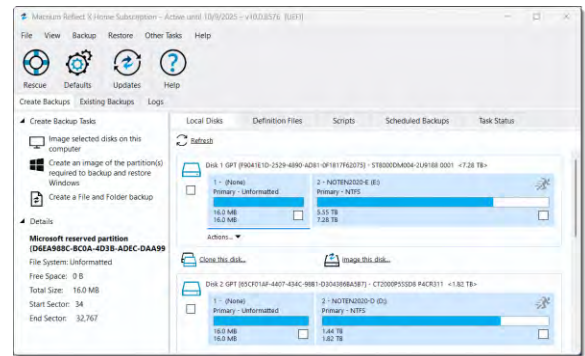
While both programs meet those requirements, they differ in ways that matter to some people.

- Macrium Reflect no longer has a free version. EaseUS Todo does.
- Macrium Reflect is purchased via subscription. EaseUS Todo can be a single purchase.
- EaseUS Todo is headquartered in China. Macrium Reflect is out of the UK.
- EaseUS Todo has fairly aggressive marketing (especially if using the free version). Macrium Reflect is more reasonable/restrained.

And, of course, their user interfaces are different.



EaseUS Todo's main interface.



Macrium Reflect's main interface.

Backing up is that important

I don't care which one you use. Backing up is so important that if having multiple recommendations means you're more likely to select one and actually [back up](#), then I've done my job.

If there were more hours in the day and it meant more people would back up, I'd probably have a third or even a fourth recommendation.

I hear regularly of many other backup solutions. Some meet my minimum requirements and some do not. Those that do all have pros and cons along the lines of the differences I've mentioned already: location, user interface, reputation, etc.

But given that I have two available recommendations that I believe in, I feel like I've got ya covered.

Do this

Back up. That much is clear.

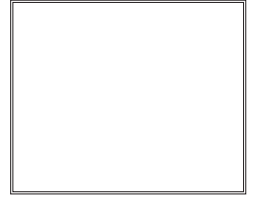
Use either of the tools that I recommend, but back up. Heck, even if it motivates you to use a tool I've not mentioned, back up.

It's that important. ☺

Basic PC Search Tips

- To quickly find files, apps, or settings, press the Windows key and start typing the name.
- You can also use the keyboard shortcut Windows + S to open the search bar.
- The search bar is accessible from the Start menu and File Explorer and searches across files, settings, and the web. ☺

P*PCompAS Newsletter
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Coming Events:

Next Membership Meeting: 2 August beginning at 9 am (see directions below)

Next Breakfast Meeting: 16 August @ 8:00 am, Golden Corral, 1970 Waynoka Road

Newsletter Deadline: 23 August

Check out our Web page at: <http://ppcompas.apcug.org>

