

So your computer is broken: what about your files?

There are four cases when your computer won't boot up:

1. Your hard-drive is fine, and your files are okay.

In this case, your Windows installation might be corrupt, but your files are okay and can be recovered. This is the best case scenario. It might be other hardware, like a video card or motherboard; in that case, the files on the hard-drive can usually be recovered.

2. Your hard-drive is bad, but your files can be recovered.

In this case, you've dodged a bullet. Your hard-drive is failing, but not so much that your important files can't be recovered. You'll need a new hard-drive, but you'll get your files back.

3. Your hard-drive is bad, and *some* of your files can be recovered.

Sections of your hard-drive surface are damaged. Some of your files can be retrieved, but some can't. You'll need a new hard-drive, but you'll get your files back.

4. Your hard-drive has mechanically failed, and your files are unrecoverable.

This is the worst-case scenario. You've lost everything you've done on this computer. The hard-drive can be replaced, but everything you've done is lost.



(fig 1. A hard-drive holds your files: photos, music, email, documents, financial records, etc.)