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Transferring and Preserving Photos

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Transferring and preserving photos is probably the single most common activity that practically all of us perform. Let’s break this into two parts – A) the actual transfer of the picture files; B) how to store them.

A) The source of pictures can be varied, although I’m sure the most common today is via Smart Phone. The most common way to transfer pictures from a phone is to use a direct USB cable connection. The phone usually appears as a storage drive to the Windows file explorer and allows you to identify those files that need to be manipulated (copied/moved/deleted/edited/ etc.) as you would with any file stored on any of your storage drives. They may also come from an actual camera using a storage card or even through a direct WiFi connection that is available on some models. Of course, pictures may also originate as email attachments or as downloads from web sites. Some of these allow direct transfer to a directory/library/folder located on your local PC.

B) By default, Windows 10 creates a folder called Pictures for each user account on a PC. This allows each user to maintain their library of files separate from other users on the same PC.

As with any collection of files, you want to think about how to organize them into sub-folders to allow for easy access later. The fact that picture files from phones and cameras will have additional information stored internally, such as the date and place the picture was taken, which will allow for ease of searching and categorizing later. This information is stored as part of the picture file as an Exchangeable image file format for digital still cameras (EXIF) standards. The storage can be on whatever is convenient and appropriate for what you want to do with them.

So for ease of portability, a USB memory stick can be ideal – cheap and readable by practically any device with a USB port. An SD memory card is common in many cameras and the micro SD card is commonly used in many other types of devices, such as android phones and other recording devices. CDs and DVDs were quite common ways to backup pictures a few years ago, but they have fallen out of use due to accessibility, speed, capacity, longevity, and cost considerations.

Of course, the best way today to ensure that you can always access your pictures is to use one of the many cloud services, many of which are already tied to your phone and PC. Refer to the April 2020 journal for a complete discussion of cloud storage options.

If you have suggestions for topics that you would like to see explained, please let me know!