

Reviews

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Page(s) 26 in print issue

Casper XP 3.0

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\$49.95

Future Systems Solution

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Scorecard

Performance 3

Ease Of Use 4

Installation 5

Documentation 4

Price 3

Overall Score 3.8 / 5



C A S P E R X P

We all know how important backups are. Yet, many of us fail to make them, which leaves us stranded if we experience a system meltdown. Casper XP 3.0 is designed to make short work of archiving your PC, so you'll be protected no matter what happens.

Casper is actually a drive-imaging and partitioning tool rather than a backup utility. Backup programs create single archive files containing copies of the items (from complete systems to individual data files) you want to protect. You can back up as much or as little data as you want, but to access even a single archived file, you must restore it to your hard drive using whatever process the program designates. In some cases, if you lose access to the backup program, you cannot restore files.

Imaging utilities, on the other hand, clone your files and drives, making mirror images. If you need to restore files—from a few data files to an entire system—you simply copy them from the clone, which you can open and explore just like any other drive.

Casper can clone a single drive or its individual partitions (segmented storage areas, or virtual drives, that reside on a physical drive)—whether or not they are system drives. In the event of a system failure, you can boot your PC and work straight from the clone Casper created. (The clone must reside on an internal drive for this to work, as Windows 2000/XP do not support booting from an external drive.) If you are running multiple Oses in a multiboot configuration, Casper can automatically clone the information needed to restore multiboot operation. When it's time to purchase a new hard drive, you can also use your Casper clone to transfer your data. Casper will automatically partition the new drive to match the previous configuration (single or multiple partitions).

After Casper clones your drive(s) the first time, its SmartClone technology employs heuristic detection methods to identify and copy, during subsequent updates, only information that is new or has changed. According to Casper representatives, this capability greatly reduces cloning time and is unique to the program. Casper also offers a smart, integrated scheduling feature that will keep your data updated.

Casper can work in the background while you operate your PC, but system performance will degrade measurably. It's best to use the scheduling feature to perform cloning at night. Casper can wake your PC from hibernation, perform its tasks, and put it back to sleep.

Casper's drive-management utility, Casper XP Explorer, lets you perform tasks usually available only with separate drive-management utilities. For instance, you can create or remove partitions, even on an existing formatted drive. You can change an active partition or drive letter assignment, and you can repair damaged boot information. (Some of these steps carry potential risks about which Casper will warn you.)

Casper works only with Win2000/XP, and it supports most bus (data transfer pathway) technologies in drives up to 2TB (terabytes, or 1,000 gigabytes). However, several considerations may affect the usefulness of this app.

First, Casper does not work with removable drives, which means you cannot clone your drives to ZIP, USB flash, CD, or DVD. To move a clone offsite for protection in the event of a fire or other disaster, you'll need to rotate between multiple internal (if you want boot capabilities) or external drives. Also, you cannot clone only a few files or folders, so your destination drive must be large enough to hold an entire drive or partition.

Finally, Casper formats and partitions the destination drive to match the drive you are cloning. It will erase any existing information on your destination drive. If you want to preserve data already stored on the drive, use Casper XP Explorer to partition the drive and then have Casper create your clone in the new, empty partition.

Overall, Casper is a nimble tool with an easy-to-use interface that makes short work of full-system backups. If you don't want to hassle with changing out rack-mounted drives (the simplest solution for rotating internal backup drives), use Casper with backups of crucial data files (stored offsite) to ensure protection. ■

by Jennifer Farwell