

**Reviews**

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## Casper

### Better Backups



*Casper*  
**\$49.95**  
*Future Systems*  
*Solutions*  
*(800) 272-5457*  
*www.fssdev.com*

I'm not enamored of the software my wife (grudgingly) uses to back up her notebook. It really uses much more storage space on her external USB hard drive than it needs to. It creates a recoverable image of her entire hard drive, but then it also does a separate backup of her personal files, which is redundant. And because it stores both types of backups in a file format only the software itself can open, I can't connect the drive to our other PCs to offload family photos or new music she's bought.

Enter Casper, the friendly ghosting software. Casper 5 cloned my wife's notebook drive to her backup drive, OS (operating system) and all, without compressing or otherwise changing any files. Not only did this let me access her backed-up files using other computers, but it also meant that if her laptop's drive fails, I could simply replace it with the hard drive inside her external enclosure. (Both drives have to support the same interface, such as SATA.)

Even better, after the first cloning, Casper updated only files that had changed, making long backup sessions a thing of the past. Well, OK, it took Casper half an hour to update her 250GB backup, probably because USB 2.0 is so slow. Still, a half-hour is much more palatable than the initial 5-hour drive cloning.

Future Systems Solutions also let me test-drive a beta of the new Casper 6. Along with advanced support for Windows 7 and SSDs (solid-state drives), this edition let me boot directly from the USB backup drive. Booting Vista from USB is like watching grass grow, but it's nevertheless a much easier way to bring a dead PC back online than swapping out its hard drive.