How to Create a System Image in Windows 7, 8, or 10

Most versions of Windows have backup utilities that will perform both File backup and System Image backup. This tutorial will show the steps needed to perform a System Image backup. This type of backup is useful to restore a PC back to a known state after a disk crash or an operating system upgrade.

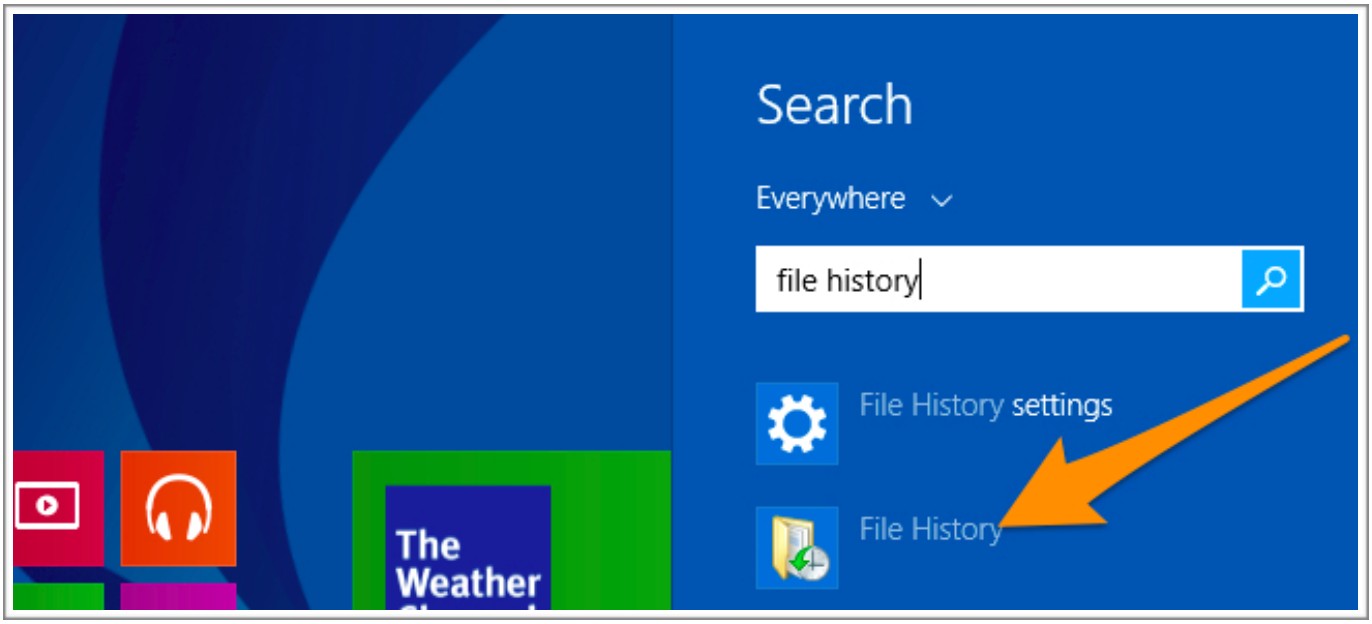
The Windows built-in utility for System Image Backup is very basic and generally does not allow extraction of individual files from the image. It also will not perform incremental, differential or scheduled backup. If these features are important to you, then there are third party utilities, available for free or a modest cost, from companies such as Acronis, Aomei, Macrium and EaseUS.

The process of finding the System Image Backup tool is different in Windows 7 and 8 or 10. Both processes are shown here, as well as how to create and use the system image, which is basically the same in either.

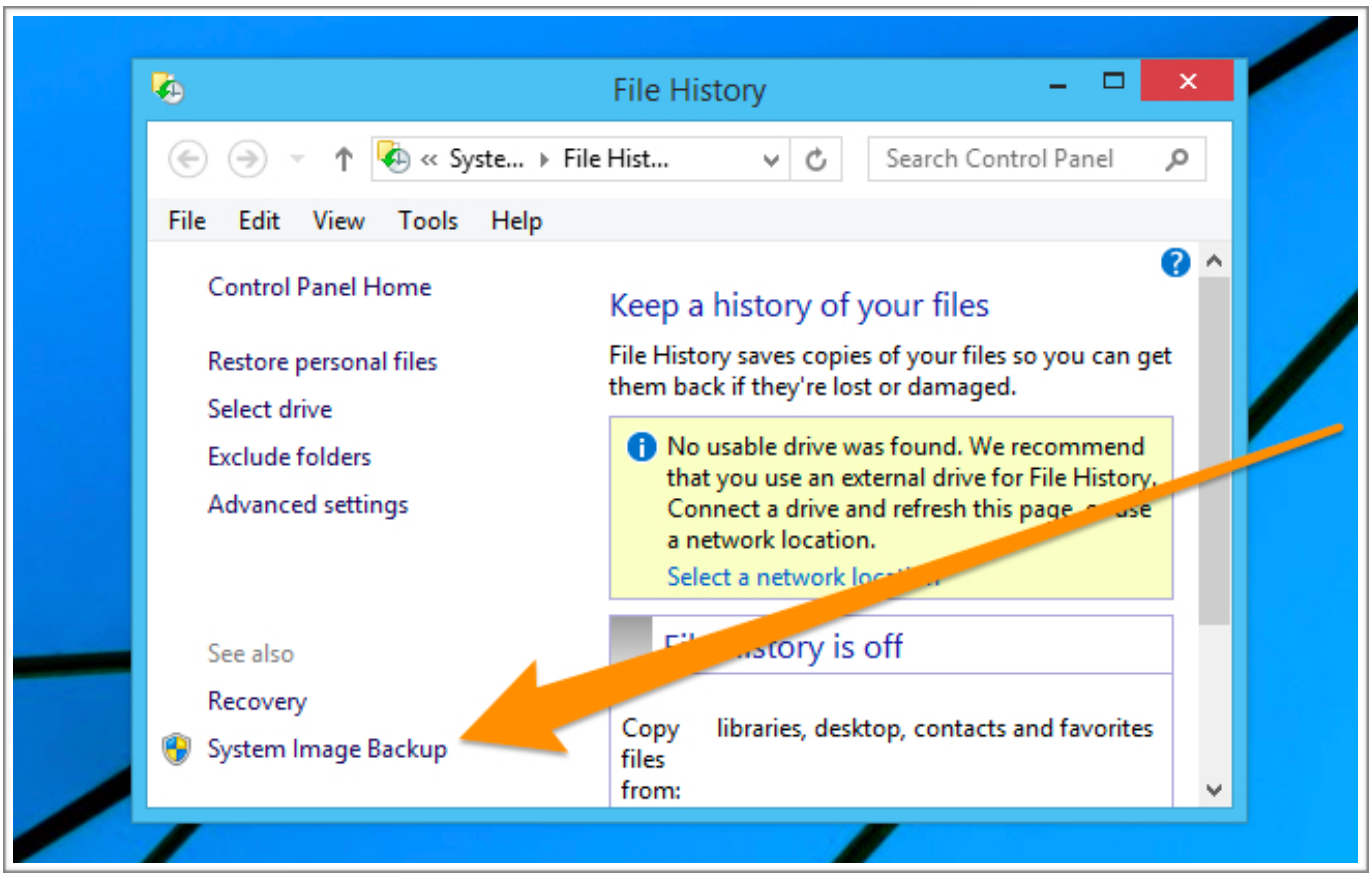
Opening System Image Backup in Windows 8.x or 10

For Windows 8.1 or 10 the system image function was moved under the File History section. You can search for it in the Start Screen search.

If you're using Windows 10 you can search the Start Menu instead, but the same item will show up either way.

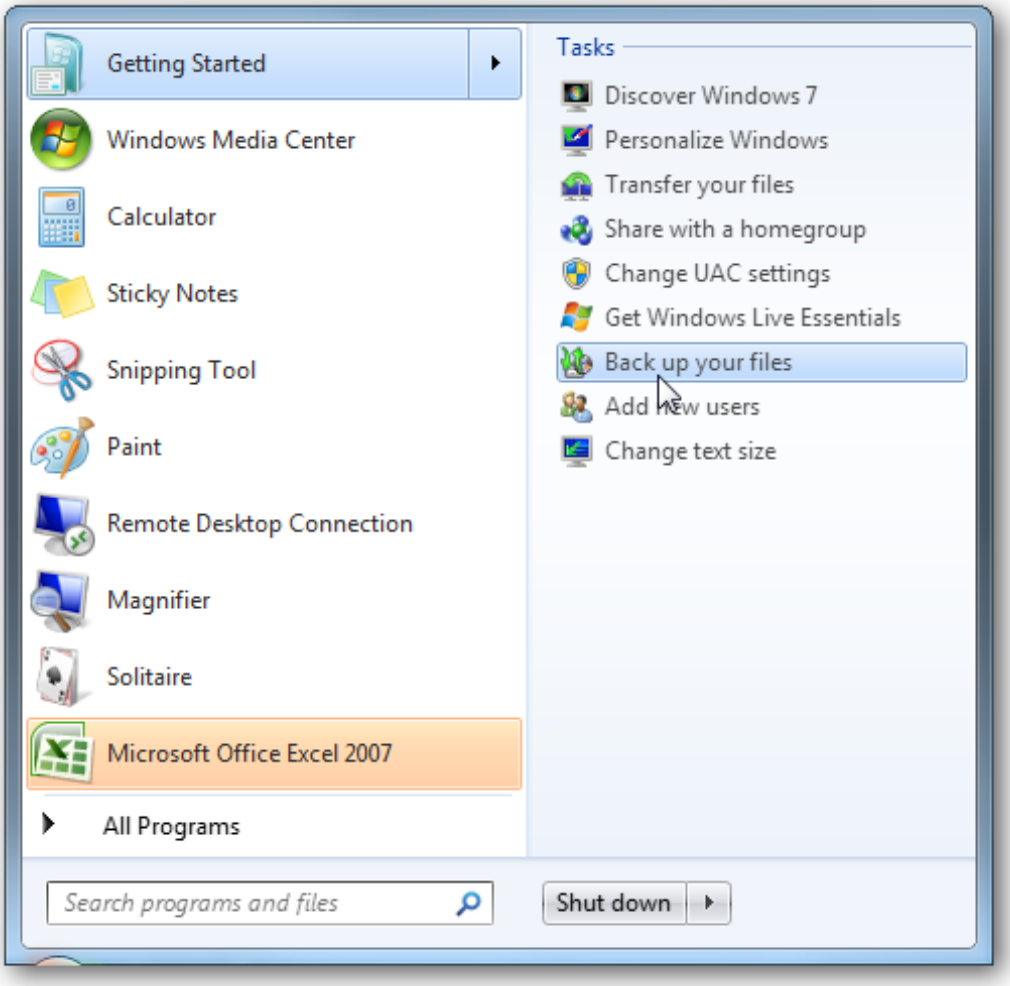


Then click the System Image Backup in the lower left-hand corner. Be aware that the screen make take some time to show anything because Windows is searching for eligible backup media.

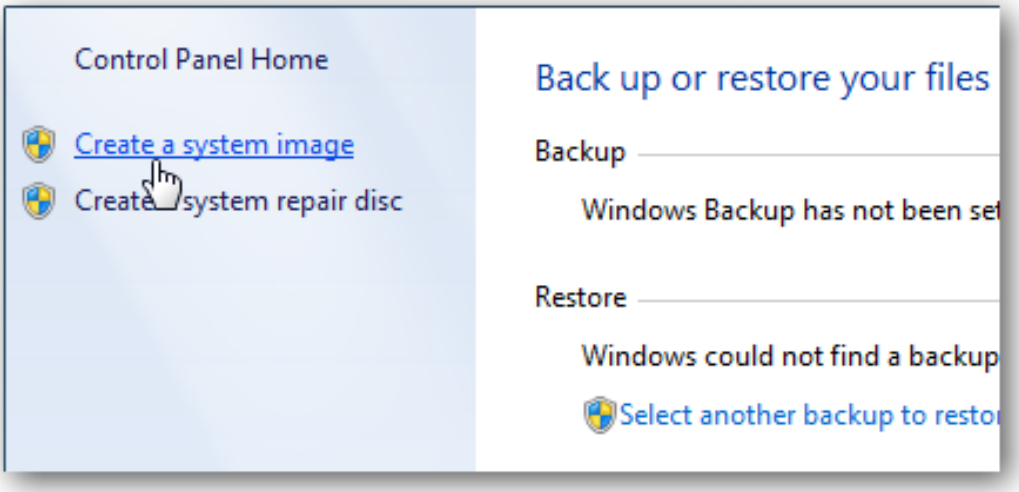


Opening System Image Backup in Windows 7

Click on the Start button and then the Getting Started entry. Under Tasks, select Back up your files.

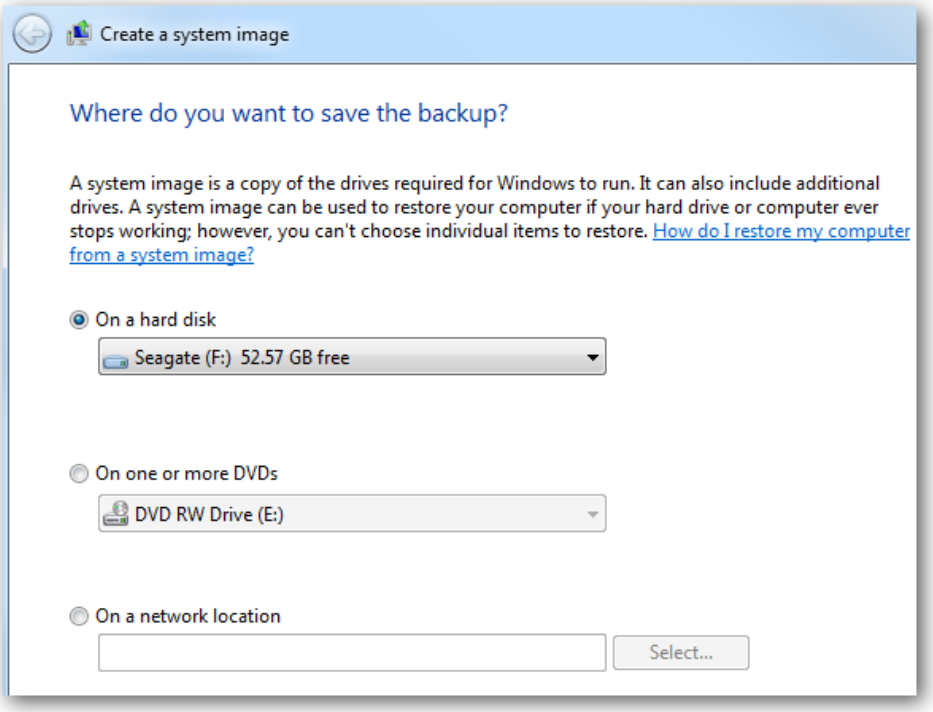


Next click on the Create a system image hyperlink found in the left column.

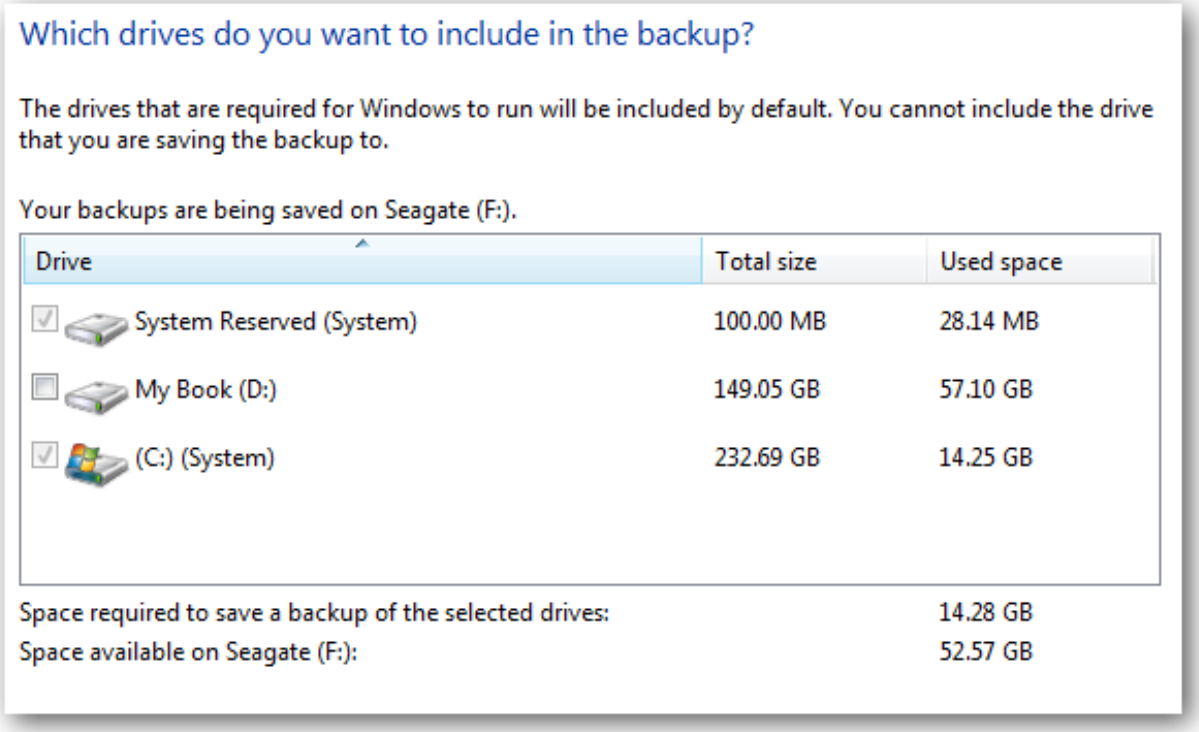


Creating a System Image Backup in Windows 7, 8, or 10

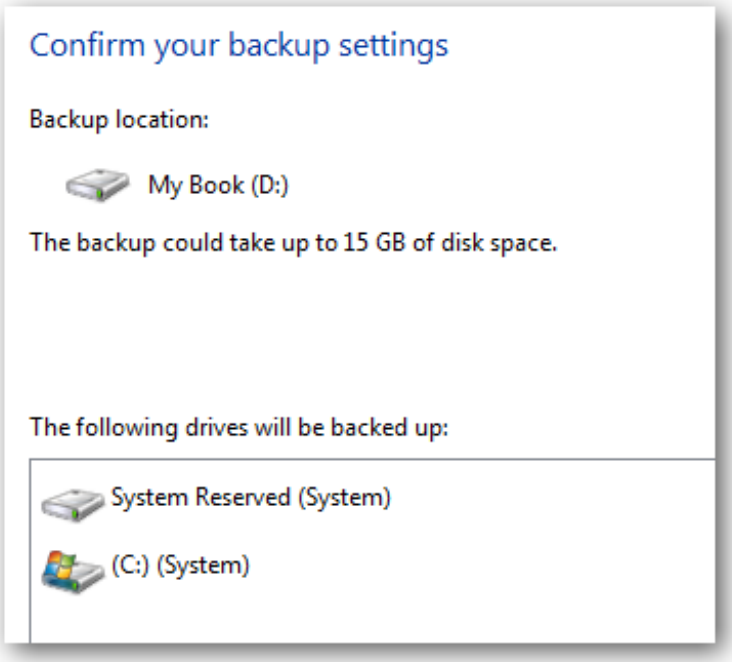
Decide where you want to save the image. You can choose an external drive, burn to multiple DVD's, or store it on a network location.



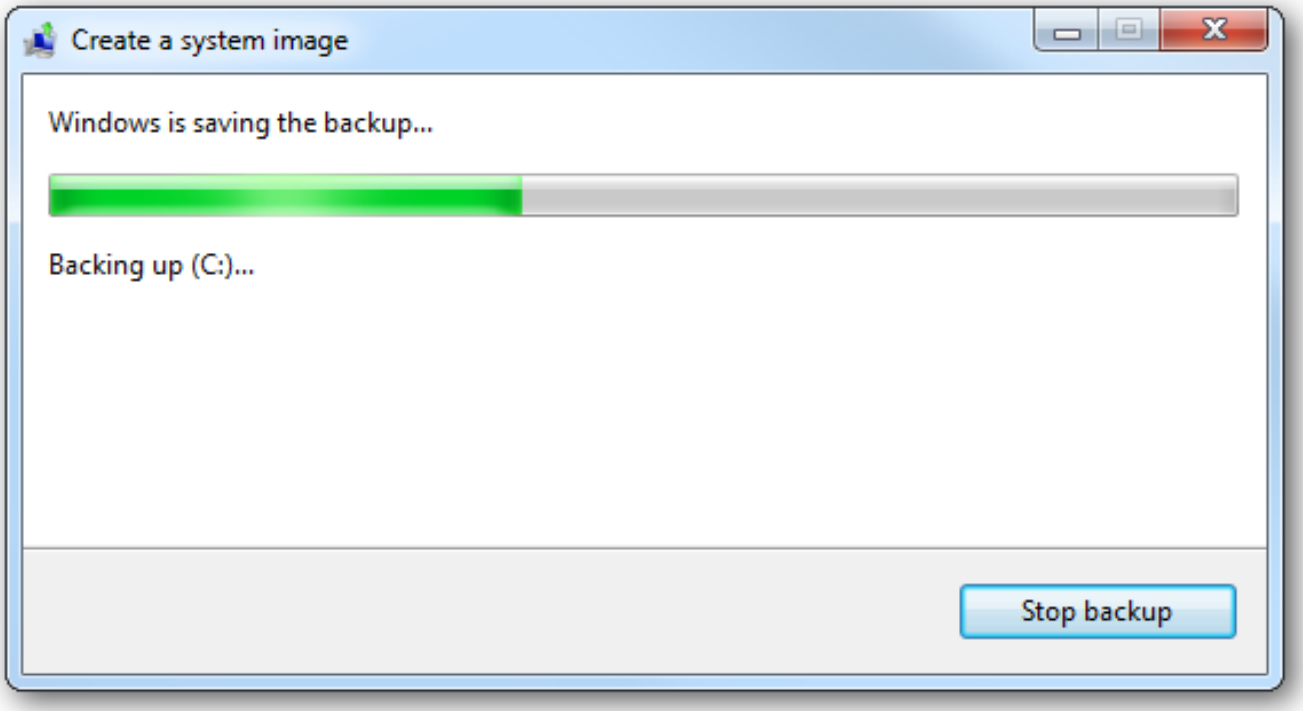
You can include other drives if you want as well but remember that will add to the size of the final image.



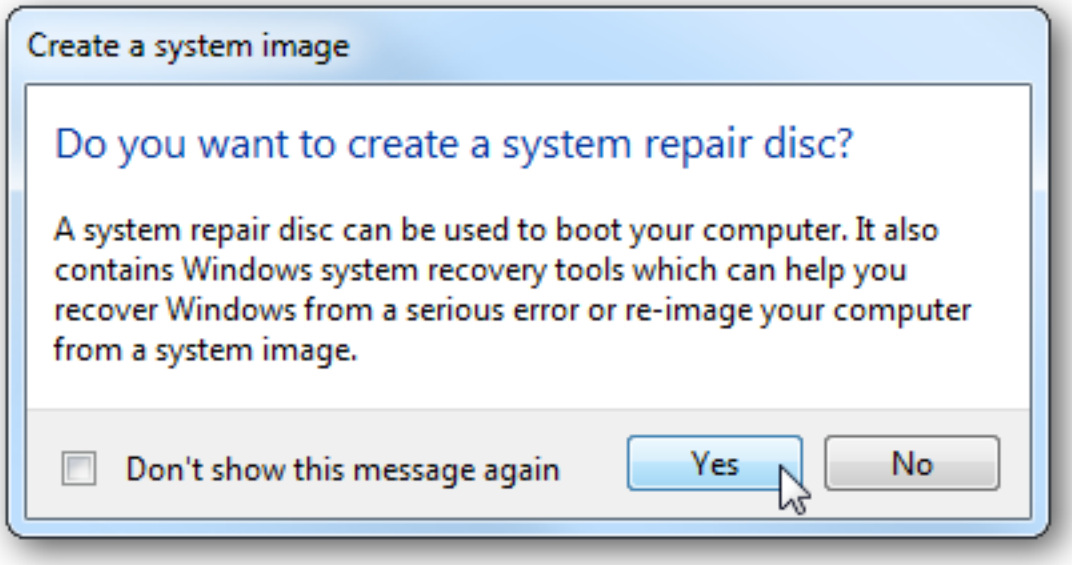
At the confirmation screen notice the amount of space the image may take. If something doesn't look right you can still go back from this point and make adjustments.

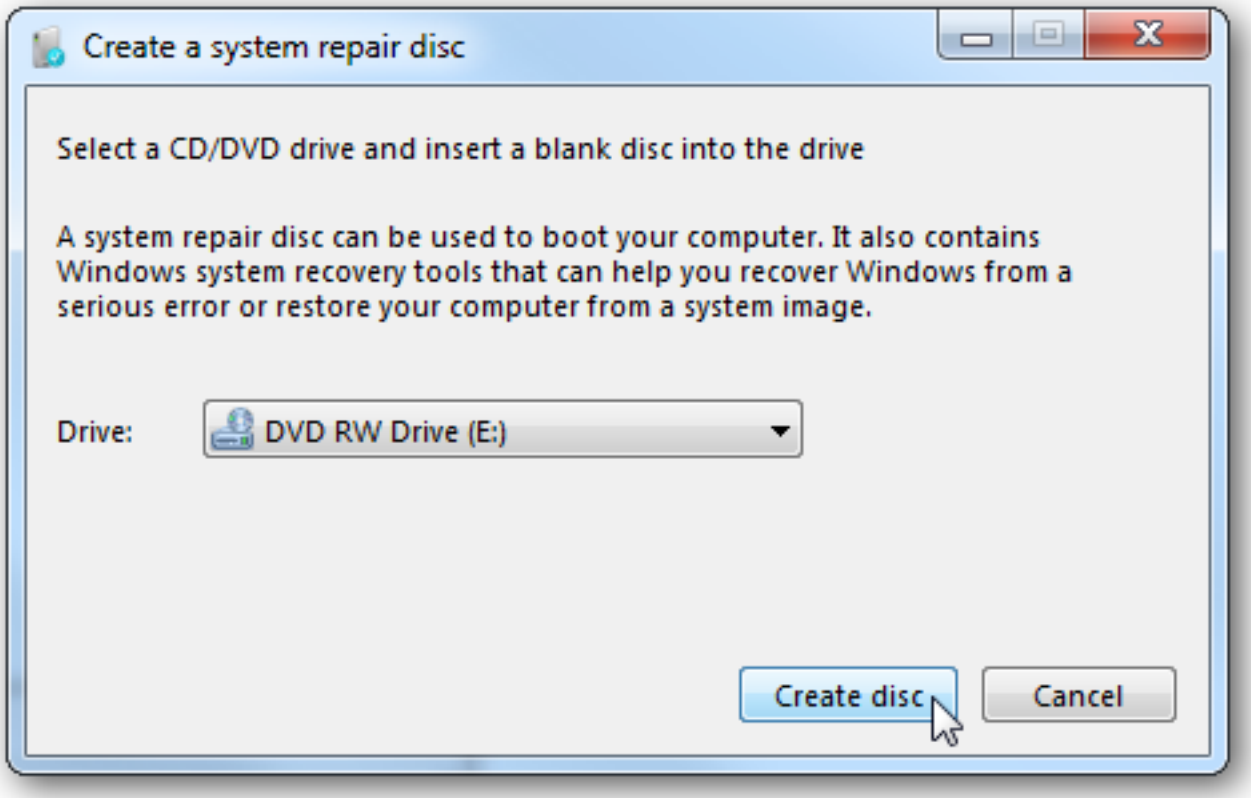


A progress meter is displayed while the image is created and backed up. In this example a disk of about 15GB in size took under 20 minutes backed up to an external drive. Times will vary depending on your system and the speed of the backup media.



After the process is complete you get the option to create a system repair disc which you should do and make sure to save it in a secure location.





When it comes time to restore the image, you will be able to use the System Recovery Options to get the system back.

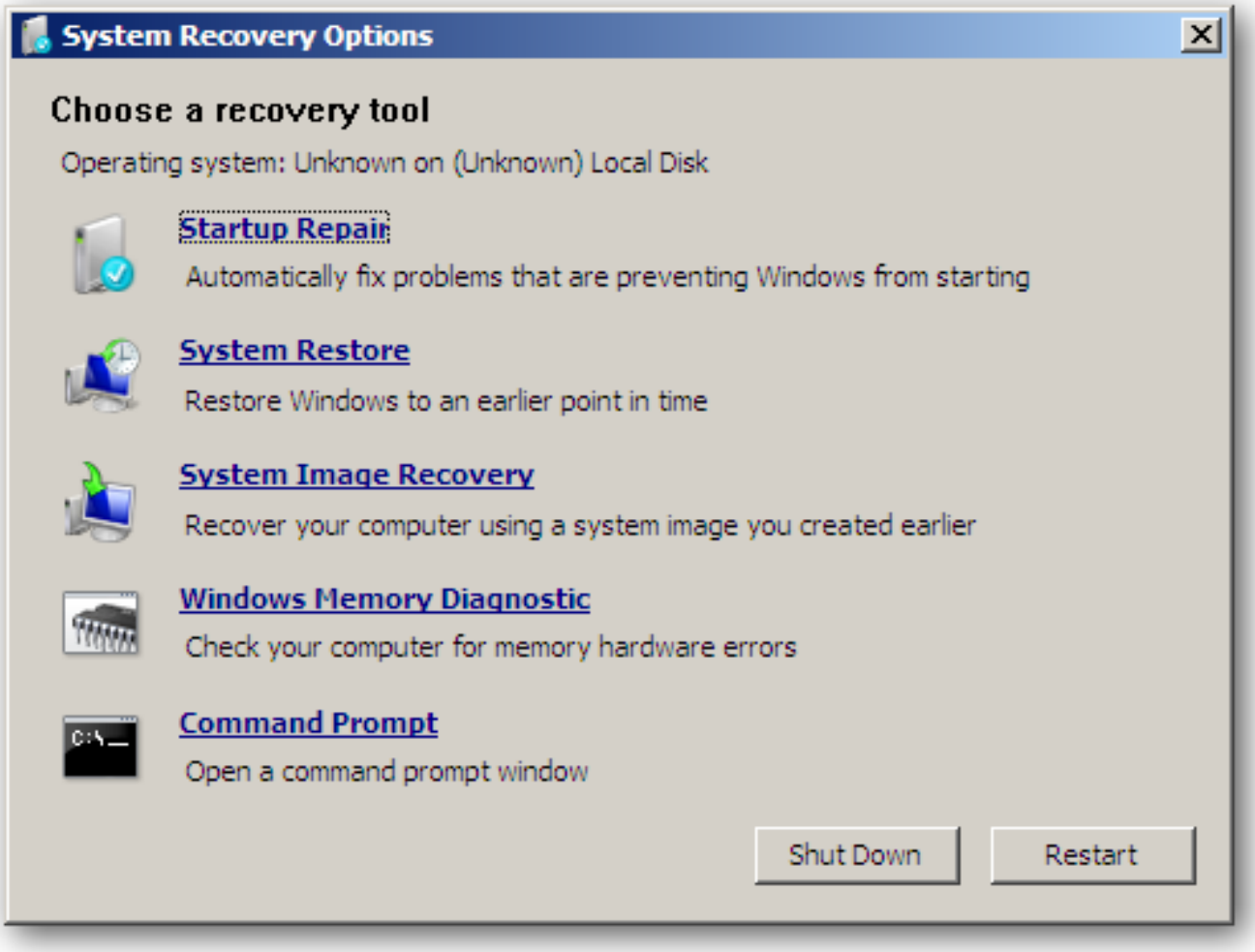
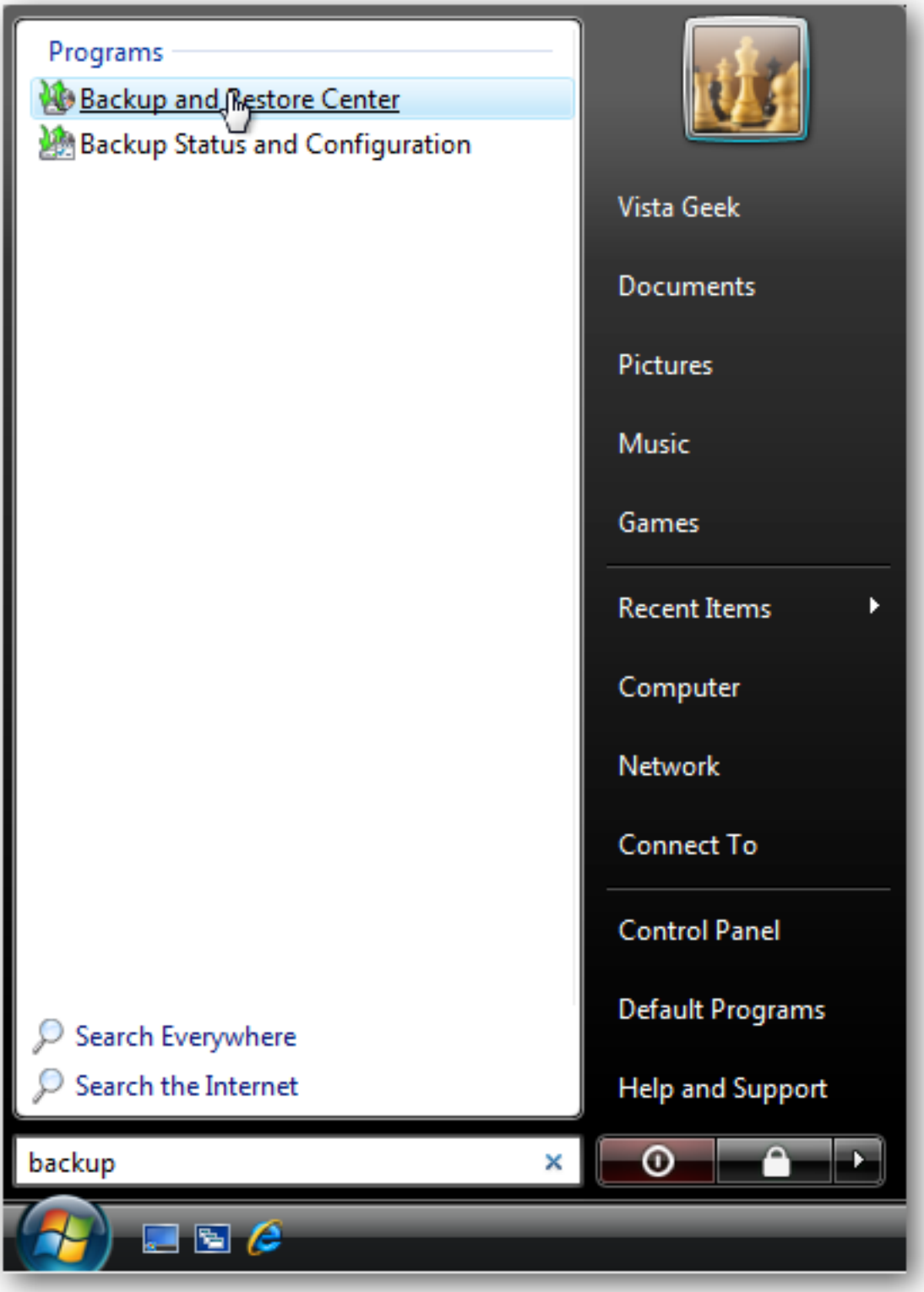


Image in Windows Vista

Vista Ultimate, Business, and Enterprise allow you to create an image, but Vista Home and Home Premium users do not have the option. The process is similar in Vista, type backup into the search bar and click on Backup and Restore Center.



Then click on Back up computer and the wizard will guide you through the process.