



<http://www.dell.com/datasafe>

Backup Review Rating

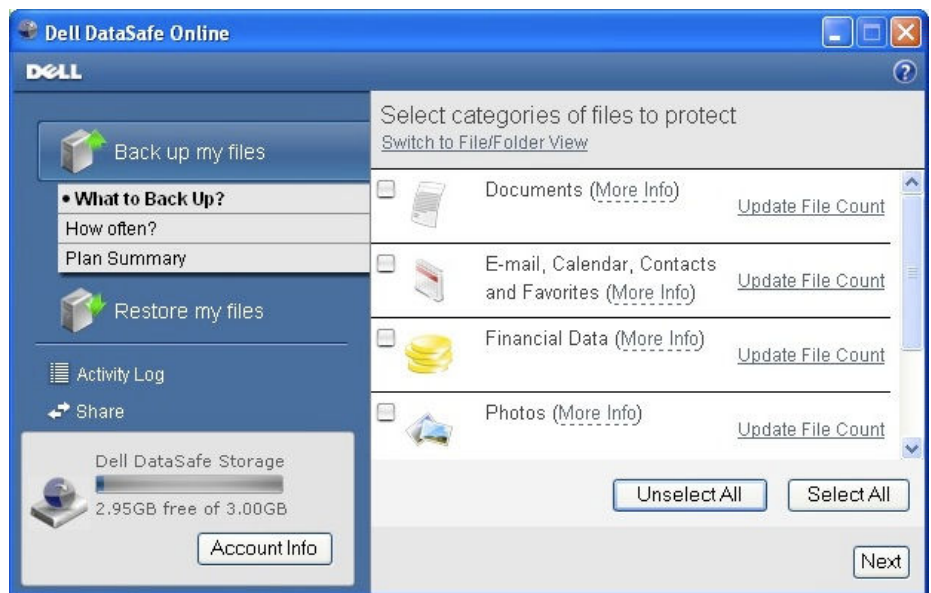


Reviewed on June 27, 2008

Low price, short on features:

It's good to see the world's leading PC company getting into online backup. We believe that in a few years, most PCs will be shipped with online backup. HP acquired Opelin, which they re-launched as Upline, and Carbonite recently announced a deal to pre-install Carbonite on all Packard Bell computers.

We'd bet that when you're PC crashes and you lose all your family pictures, you're less likely to buy the same brand PC again. So online backup should be important for all PC manufacturers.



Dell DataSafe is a good value, but it is only a so-so product in terms of design and features. To its credit, it's not overly complicated and its low price will make it a good value for many users – hence our 3-star rating.

Prices for a one-year plan range from \$1.19/GB to \$3/GB. The average user backing up 20 GB will be spending \$29 per year on Dell Datasafe -- one of the lowest prices we've seen.

Test Results:

Signup/Installation

Signing up for a Dell Datasafe trial is more complicated than necessary; you have to click on the purchase link and select the free trial as a \$0.00 purchase. This is an example of the existing billing system governing the user experience of a free trial.

Luckily, the installation did not take very long; nor was it complicated. It only took a minute or so after the initial download to complete the setup. Unfortunately, once it was installed, neither the default backup plan nor the program started automatically.

Backing up Files

Datasafe requires a user to log in after installing the product. Every unnecessary step like this worsens the user experience. The file selection process allows two methods of selection: by general type of file, or by location and specific file type. The default backup selection generates a list of rules that took us almost ten minutes to wade through. It actually takes eight clicks just to back up a specific file.

Dell Datasafe backed up 100 MB in one hour and 16 minutes; showing a rate of 180 Kbps -- the slowest sustained backup speed we have encountered thus far. At that rate, one could expect to back up only 1.8 GB a day. Even the slowest residential DSL can provide 350 Kbps.

Backup Options

Dell offers no continuous backup -- only a very basic scheduled backup that is limited in its options. The schedule doesn't allow for complex or asymmetric schedules, such as different backup rules for workdays and weekends.

Datasafe doesn't offer versioning -- a standard feature in most leading backup services like [Carbonite](#), [Mozy](#) and [Idrive](#). So, if you accidentally overwrite a file, you can't go to Dell Datasafe to restore yesterday's version. There is also no option for keeping private encryption keys.

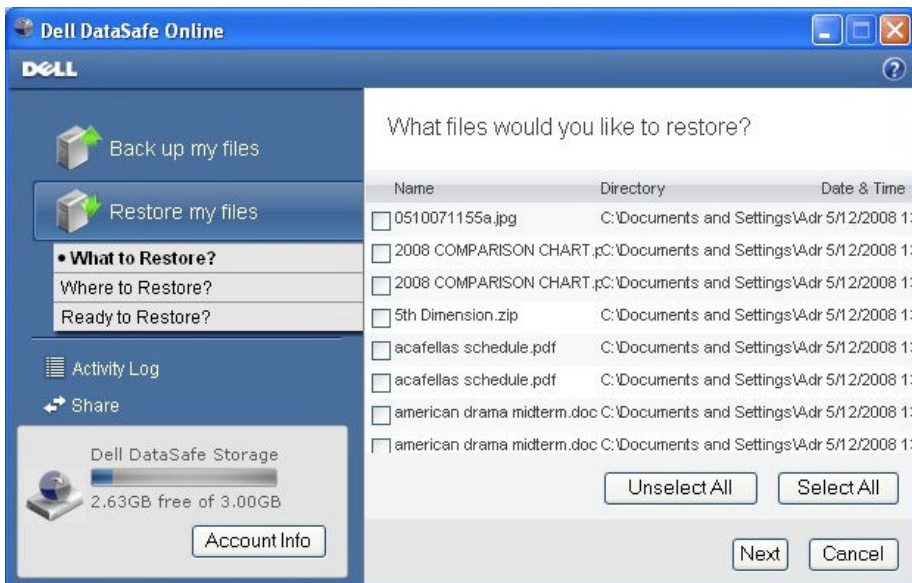
Restoring Files

The most glaring problem with Dell Datasafe's restore process is that if you delete a file on your PC, it is almost immediately deleted from your backup. This means that you can't use Datasafe as a backstop in the event that you accidentally erase a file from your PC. Other vendors report that nearly half their customers use their online backup services to recover deleted files, so this is a big oversight and certainly reduces the value of the service.

If you want to do a complete restore, you still have to select the files that you want to restore from a huge long list by clicking "select all." It works ok, but it's

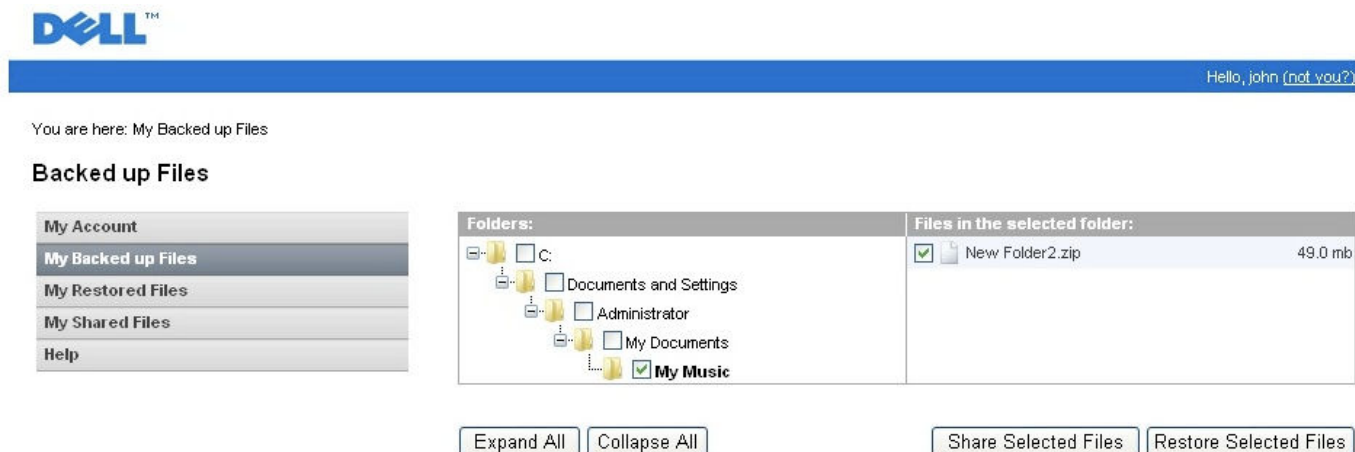
unnecessary if you're doing a complete restore. If your backed up computer was running XP and you restore to a Vista machine, there's nothing to help you map your old XP file structure to the new file structure in Vista -- a bit of an inconvenience, but at least you won't lose any of your files.

We encountered a number of bugs and had some difficulty in actually recovering a file. When we succeeded, we recovered a 5.6MB file in 2 minutes 20 seconds -- roughly 320kbps. Our DSL is capable of downloading at about 6000kbps, so something on Dell's end was slowing it down pretty severely. We did not try restoring very large backups, so it's possible that some of this time was not actually spent in transmission.



Sharing

Dell Datasafe offers an ability to share files that is much less intimidating than HP Upline's. You select the files you want to share, enter the recipient's email address, and they receive and email with a link. In our tests we were unable to get it to work. We repeatedly got an error message. To be fair, we did not attempt to resolve this problem with customer support.



The screenshot displays the Dell Datasafe web interface. At the top left is the Dell logo. A blue header bar contains the text "Hello, john (not you?)". Below the header, a breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: My Backed up Files". The main content area is titled "Backed up Files". On the left is a sidebar with a menu containing "My Account", "My Backed up Files" (highlighted), "My Restored Files", "My Shared Files", and "Help". The main area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Folders:", shows a tree structure with "C:" expanded, containing "Documents and Settings", which is further expanded to show "Administrator" and "My Documents". "My Music" is selected with a green checkmark. The right column, titled "Files in the selected folder:", lists one file: "New Folder2.zip" with a size of "49.0 mb", also marked with a green checkmark. At the bottom of the main area are four buttons: "Expand All", "Collapse All", "Share Selected Files", and "Restore Selected Files".

Summary:

Dell's foray into the online backup world is relatively cheap and might be a reasonable choice for someone with less than 20GB of data, based on the per GB pricing. Failure of restores and sharing notwithstanding, we recommend that customers investigate a backup utility that 1) offers more backup management options, 2) a reasonable speed of transfer and 3) a well thought-out interface for both backing up and restoring files. Remember, when your computer crashes and it's time to put your online backup service provider to the test, you'll have forgotten all about how much you've paid for the service; all you'll care about is getting your important files back quickly and easily. Dell Datasafe simply does not meet this basic requirement.