

RAID drives

RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks) hard drives are drives that have been specifically designed to back up and archive files. They consist of individual drives that are linked together, and the way the drives interact is what dictates the type of RAID drive it is. The most basic form is a RAID-0 setup, where any number of drives are put into the same case to create one big drive. An example of this would be where two 750GB drives are put into a RAID-0 setup to create a single 1.5TB drive. This is no different to having two individual drives, but the computer views them as one. These are great if you want capacity, but if one of the linked drives fails you are likely to have problems recovering data from the other drives too.

One of the most popular systems is RAID-1, where you have an even number of linked drives (commonly two) of the same capacity. The data is backed up to both drives at the same time. This is quite often called mirroring, as the two drives have exactly the same information on them. If one of the drives was to fail, then the information is safe on the mirror drive. Clearly the disadvantage is using two drives to hold the capacity of one, but at least it's safe.

RAID-5 is another popular format, but quite a lot more complicated. This system requires a minimum of three drives that appear as one to your computer. In very simple terms, the data is distributed in blocks of information across all the drives. The parity data for the images is evenly distributed in a way that means that if one of the drives were to fail, the information could be rebuilt from the remaining drives when a replacement is installed. This all happens automatically and is popular with demanding users who need high capacity storage and improved data safety.



LaCie Hard Disk MAX 2TB £185

For simplicity and great value, the LaCie 2TB Hard Disk MAX is a very attractive drive. Not only does it look rather impressive with its shiny black casing with blue LED lighting, it also offers plenty of storage space too. You can set the drive to RAID 0 to get 2TB of storage or to RAID 1 for a mirrored 1TB. This drive is connected to either PC or Mac via a USB 2.0 output. Software is supplied for scheduled back-up management, which makes it easy to keep your images safe.

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