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Featured Drupal Module: Backup And Migrate

By [Tyme](#)

Let's just lay it out there. If you don't have reliable [database](#) backups, you are toast...or will be at sometime or another. But, have no fear, the [Backup And Migrate](#) module is here! Shout out to [developer](#) Ronan Dowling for his noteworthy contribution.

The Drupal Module "[Backup And Migrate](#)" (one of my personal favs) has so many nice features. It not only saves you the steps of opening and logging into PHPMyAdmin or shell to make a database dump, but it lets you make truly useful database backups. By that, I refer to the flexibility of selecting which tables to back up and which tables to leave empty (as shown below). This is very convenient for making a database dump without cache, log, or watchdog [data](#) -- tables that can become very large.

Database Options

You may omit specific tables, or specific table data from the backup file. Only omit data that you know you will not need such as cache data, or tables from other applications. Excluding tables can break your Drupal install, so do not change these settings unless you know what you're doing.

Exclude the following tables altogether:

- access
- actions
- actions_aid
- advanced_help_index
- aggregator_category
- aggregator_category_feed
- aggregator_category_item
- aggregator_feed
- aggregator_item
- authmap
- autologout
- backup_migrate_destinations
- backup_migrate_profiles
- backup_migrate_schedules
- batch
- blocks
- blocks_roles
- book
- boxes
- cache

[View as checkboxes](#)

The selected tables will not be added to the backup file.

Exclude the data from the following tables:

- access
- actions
- actions_aid
- advanced_help_index
- aggregator_category
- aggregator_category_feed
- aggregator_category_item
- aggregator_feed
- aggregator_item
- authmap
- autologout
- backup_migrate_destinations
- backup_migrate_profiles
- backup_migrate_schedules
- batch
- blocks
- blocks_roles
- book
- boxes
- cache

[View as checkboxes](#)

The selected tables will have their structure backed up but not their contents. This is useful for excluding cache data to reduce file size.

Lock tables during backup

This can help reduce data corruption, but will make your site unresponsive.

Backup Scheduling

You can schedule backups to be automatically performed at specified intervals (every X number of hours/days) and designate how many backups to retain at any one time. You will need to create a "cron job" for your [server](#), in order to trigger the automatic back-up process.

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Backup and Migrate

Backup Restore Destinations Profiles Schedules

List Schedules Create Schedule

Enabled

Schedule Name:

Settings Profile: [Create new profile](#)

Backup every: Days

Number of Backup files to keep:

The number of backup files to keep before deleting old ones. Use 0 to never delete backups. Other files in the destination directory will get deleted if you specify a limit.

Destination: [Create new destination](#)

Choose where the backup file will be saved. Backup files contain sensitive data, so be careful where you save them.

Set a default name for your automated backups, such as "Nightly-Backup", and set the filename to append with the system date (see later screenshot). This will distinguish those backups from any manual backups that you might make.

You might wish to create independent scheduled backups for certain tables. For example, you might choose to make a full database backup only weekly, but take a backup of key tables (such as users, nodes) daily. If you do so, be sure that you understand all of the associated tables. The Schedules tab displays a list of all of your scheduled activity and when the last backup was made.

[I typically schedule a database backup for once every 24 hours -- backing up at midnight, with the last 6 backups saved to the server. Then, at least once per month, I download a full backup file to my local [computer.](#)]

Backup and Migrate

Backup Restore Destinations Profiles Schedules

List Schedules Create Schedule

Automatically backup up your database on a regular schedule using [cron](#). [\[more help.\]](#)

Name	Destination	Profile	Frequency	Keep	Enabled	Last run	Operations
Nightly_Backups	Scheduled Backups Directory	Default Settings	Once a day	5	Enabled	17 Sep 2010 - 1:01am	edit delete

[Create a new schedule](#)

Just before you add a new module or perform any module update, you should always make a manual backup. This way, if that module does not play nicely with others, you can roll back (restore) your database. Here is where the Backup And Migrate module really saves time. If you need to roll back a database, you simply review your list of server-side backup files (manual and automatic) and click the "restore" link for the file to which you wish to resort.

Manual Backups Directory Files

Backup Restore Destinations Profiles Schedules

List Destinations Create Destination

Filename	Date	Age	Size	Operations
NightlyBackup_Live-2010-09-07T16-28-35.mysql	7 Sep 2010 - 5:28pm	1 week	15.65 MB	download restore delete
live-test_sync-2010-08-30T09-29-39.mysql	30 Aug 2010 - 10:29am	2 weeks	12.48 MB	download restore delete
pre-Core_plus_updates-2010-08-30T08-56-38.mysql	30 Aug 2010 - 9:56am	2 weeks	15.6 MB	download restore delete
NightlyBackup_Live-2010-08-13T13-01-10.mysql	13 Aug 2010 - 2:01pm	5 weeks	13.2 MB	download restore delete
NightlyBackup_Live-2010-07-22T14-54-20.mysql	22 Jul 2010 - 3:54pm	8 weeks	12.89 MB	download restore delete
pre-Autologout-update-2010-07-21T21-56-50.mysql	21 Jul 2010 - 10:56pm	8 weeks	12.34 MB	download restore delete
pre-remaining-updates-2010-07-21T21-28-34.mysql	21 Jul 2010 - 10:28pm	8 weeks	15.15 MB	download restore delete
preQuickTabs-adj-2010-07-15T16-24-58.mysql	15 Jul 2010 - 5:25pm	9 weeks	13.27 MB	download restore delete
preUpdates-pt3-2010-07-10T16-59-49.mysql	10 Jul 2010 - 5:59pm	9 weeks	12.29 MB	download restore delete
Pre-Updates_-2010-07-09.sql	10 Jul 2010 - 5:56pm	9 weeks	14.15 MB	download restore delete
pt1_GoodUpdates-2010-07-10.sql	10 Jul 2010 - 5:56pm	9 weeks	15.35 MB	download restore delete
pre-Updates-2010-07-10.sql	10 Jul 2010 - 5:56pm	9 weeks	15.35 MB	download restore delete

You will note from my example above that some of the backups are the automatic ones, while others are manual backups. (Note: It is a good idea to periodically delete old manual backups that you feel are no longer needed, to spare disk storage space.)

Quick Backup and Advanced Backup

The Backup And Migrate module offers two modes for making backups: Quick Backup, where you select a backup profile and save destination;

Backup and Migrate

Backup
Restore
Destinations
Profiles
Schedules

Quick Backup
Advanced Backup

Use this form to run simple manual backups of your database. Visit the [help page](#) for more help using this module. [more help...]

Quick Backup

Backup from

Default Database

to

Manual Backups Directory

using

Default Settings

[Backup now](#)

Manual Backups Directory

For more backup options, try the [advance](#) [Download](#)

and, Advanced Backup, where you can use additional options, such as database name, compression, and whether to include a timestamp:

Backup and Migrate

Backup
Restore
Destinations
Profiles
Schedules

Quick Backup
Advanced Backup

Use this form to run manual backups of your database with more advanced options. If you have any [settings profiles](#) saved you can load those settings. You can save any of the changes you make to these settings as a new settings profile. [more help...]

Load Settings:

Default Settings

[Load Profile](#)

Backup File

Backup file name:

NightlyBackup_Live

You can use tokens in the file name.

Replacement patterns

Append a timestamp.

Timestamp format:

Y-m-d\TH-i-s

Should be a PHP [date\(\)](#) format string.

Compression:

No Compression

No Compression

GZip

BZip

Zip

on Module to enable backup file encryption.

Advanced Options

A few other nice features that can be enabled/disabled as default, or saved as custom profile, are:

- ▶ Maintenance Mode -- Puts Drupal into maintenance mode before making a backup or restore.
- ▶ Database Lock -- Locks the database from updates (adds/edits/deletions) before making a backup or restore.
- ▶ Email notification -- Sends email to a designated email address when the backup is successful and/or when backup fails.

Syncing Live and Testing Sites

This database tool is very handy for syncing a live site and a testing site. (You do have a testing site, right?!) To sync one to the other, simply copy the desired saved backup from the `sites/default/files/backup_migrate` (or your custom destination) folder of one site to the same folder of the other site, using your server file manager. Then, simply do a restore using that latest file. Viola!

Summary

One of the great advantages to the Backup And Migrate module is that it makes the important task of backing up the database so quick and painless. With this module, there is no excuse for not making a quick backup before you do module updates or make major changes to your live site. It is very useful when working in collaborative environments where you cannot be sure how much work has been done since the last scheduled backup. For whatever reason, be safe, not sorry. Working with Drupal is only scary when you don't have backups.

Tyme is a freelance writer and multimedia specialist of many years. She likes walks in the park, cotton candy, and baby ducks. To learn more: [MultimediaByTyme.com](#).

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10/16/2010 12:32 PM

By [JustJoe](#) September 27 2010 8:40 PMPDT

Great article. I'm downloading it now! I didn't know about it before. Thanks for sharing that.

[Reply to this comment](#)



By [anonymous](#) September 28 2010 9:03 AMPDT

Thanks for pointing out some of the features of this module. I have greater appreciation for what it does, now, and will be sure to use it.

[Reply to this comment](#)



By [ben](#) September 30 2010 12:47 PMPDT

I didn't even read your article (sorry) but needed to comment on how crucial this module is for our development/launch cycle. You can essentially use this to clone a site in under an hour, for specific testing, module manipulation, etc. This is a must have module, in my opinion!

[Reply to this comment](#)



[Reply by Tyme](#) October 3 2010 1:27 PMPDT

@ben: Sshhh. Not so loud, clients will hear you! We gotta make this stuff seem hard and labor intensive. *wink*

(And, shame on you for not reading the article. Doesn't score me any points with the publisher. Heh heh.)



By [Tyme](#) October 3 2010 1:23 PMPDT

SECURITY TIP: Create a directory/folder outside of your website's root directory/folder to store the Backup-Migrate files, as this folder will not be accessible by Web browser. Especially if you use Drupal public file system. Adds extra protection of your sensitive data. Also, if you somehow wiped out your Drupal install root folder, you'd have your backups saved elsewhere.

So, for example, if your Web root is `..public_html` (or `..htdocs`), create a directory outside that (technically on the same level). Example: `home/tyme/BACKUPS/backup-migrate_live`

Then, use the modules DESTINATION tab to add that as the scheduled and manual backup destination folder.

Another great option on the DESTINATION features is the CHMOD option. You can set this to 644 or lower for even more protection.

This module so rocks!

NOTE: That extra functionality is in version 2.x, so be sure to install that one.

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