

Review: Drobo can store all your data and keep it safe

March 3 2017, by Jim Rossman, The Dallas Morning News



Data. We all create it every day, and there is likely a decent amount of it you'd like to store long-term.

Take a photo of your kids today with your phone? Pull out your phone to shoot a short video at their soccer game?

You probably want to archive it so you can enjoy it months or years from now.

But we all know what it's like to run out of storage on our phones or computers.

So, what do you do?

Buy a phone with more memory? Maybe, but that's a short-term solution.

You probably transfer those photos and videos to a computer, and when the computer's [hard drive](#) gets full, you have to think about how you're going to store these things in the future.

Music libraries, digital photos and videos, email messages, and documents will all need to be stored.

You can move your data to the cloud (which is safe but can get expensive) or you can get an external hard drive (but what if it dies?).

So how do big corporations handle data? Likely with large banks of hard

drives that are configured to work together both to increase speed and provide data security.

Lucky for us there are smaller, home versions of those solutions, and today I'm reviewing one from Drobo.

The Drobo 5D is a small black box that has slots for five hard drives.

Drobo uses its hardware and software to make those drives act as one big hard drive. But wait - there's more.

The Drobo system uses a certain amount of the storage space to keep track of the data, so much so that if any of the drives fail (which they inevitably will do), all you have to do is pull out the dead drive and pop in a new one and just carry on. Your data is protected.

Similarly, you can configure the Drobo so that it can survive two drives failing at the same time.

Of course, such a configuration means more storage space used up for data overhead.

The Drobo 5D can use virtually any SATA hard drive of any size. The drives don't need to match. Have a few old hard drives sitting around? Pop them in for added space.

Need more space on the Drobo? Pop out a small drive and replace it with a larger one. The Drobo will reshuffle the data to all the drives and increase the size of your storage volume.

If you do replace a drive for a larger one, you'll have to wait awhile for Drobo to do its data reshuffling before you can upgrade another drive. There are status lights to let you know what's going on inside.

How much space can you expect to get with a Drobo? The website drobo.com has a capacity calculator.

For example, if I put five 2-terabyte drives in the Drobo, I'll have 7.26TB available for data storage and 1.82TB set aside for data protection.

If I really need a big bucket of storage, I can put five 8TB drives in and get 29.05TB for storage, and it'll use 7.32TB for protection.

These examples use single disk redundancy, meaning one drive can fail and the data is still protected.

SPECS

The 5D connects to your computer using USB 3.0 or Thunderbolt. This type of box is called Direct Attached Storage.

Drobo makes a similar product called the 5N that connects to your network via Ethernet. That type of product is called Network Attached Storage.

A DAS box is designed to always be connected to a computer, where a NAS box just sits somewhere on your network to be accessed by multiple computers.

Of course, if you have a DAS connected to a computer in your office, you can choose to use the office computer to share that storage to other computers.

The 5D and 5N do not require tools to insert or remove drives. The drive slots are located behind a plastic cover that's held on by small magnets. The drives slide right in and are kept in with a small plastic release clip.

You can use standard rotational drives or solid state drives in any slot. You'll need an adapter to use a 2.5-inch SSD in the Drobo, which uses 3.5-inch desktop drives.

The 5D and 5N have a small door on the bottom that hides a slot for an optional mSATA SSD. The SSD slot is called the Drobo Accelerator Bay, and it uses the SSD's flash data storage to accelerate performance. Using the SSD slot is not mandatory; it just speeds things up a bit. I didn't have an SSD available to test that feature.

The 5D measures 5.9-by-7.3-by-10.3 inches and weighs 8.5 pounds without drives. When it's full, it's heavy, but you're not supposed to pick it up and move it very often. In fact, you should shut it down before moving it at all, and Drobo recommends taking out the drives before any big moves to be safe.

The Drobo 5D works on Macs or Windows machines, and it has a built-in battery so it has enough power to make sure you don't lose any data if your electricity goes out. There's not enough to keep it running for a significant length of time, but it'll finish any data transfer in progress and shut down the right way.

SETUP

The Drobo 5D is really easy to set up. You unbox it, plug it in, insert at least two drives and plug it into your computer. There's software to walk you through setup and then it just appears like any other hard drive on your system.

It's ideal for backups of your computer's hard drive, as well as any other [storage](#) you need.

The disk protection feature means your data is as safe as you can make

it, especially if you use double disk redundancy. Of course best practices are to have a spare drive ready to pop in should one of the Drobo's drives signal that it's having a problem.

Speaking of signaling, the Drobo can send you an on-screen alert or an email message if any of the drives are in trouble. The software, called Drobo Dashboard, is easy to use and understand.

I can't help but feel relief when I see the Drobo. It's nice to make a backup, but it's really nice to have your backup on a Drobo that can survive a disk failure.

PRICING

The Drobo 5D costs \$699 (prices are without drives). The 5N costs \$549.

Drobo makes boxes starting at \$299 for a four-bay, up to \$1,699 for eight bays.

See drobo.com for all the product configuration options. The larger Drobos are perfect for storing files for a small office.

—

Pros: Super easy setup, drives are hot swappable and easily upgradable.

Cons: A bit expensive.

Bottom line: The Drobo 5D will bring you peace of mind when it comes to protecting your [data](#).

©2017 The Dallas Morning News

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Review: Drobo can store all your data and keep it safe (2017, March 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-drobo-safe.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.