

Welcome to episode twelve of Tech Tips from California State University, Long Beach. Today's topic covers removing the hard drive from an unrepairable computer and turning it into an external hard drive to be used with your new computer.

When my laptop died, I was concerned that I might never be able to retrieve files off the computer's hard drive. At the same time, I was hoping to avoid the astronomical costs that would be involved with repairing that obsolete computer.

The repair tech suggested an elegant solution. He determined that the hard drive itself was probably working properly, it was only that the computer's Central Processing Unit (CPU) was malfunctioning and could no longer communicate with the hard drive. He suggested I purchase a "hard drive enclosure" that would allow me to use the old hard drive as an external storage device with my new laptop. That would allow me to access my old files and to use the drive for storing additional files.

I followed his instructions and it worked like a charm. Here's what's involved.

Hard drive enclosures are sold at many consumer electronics stores. They can be purchased in one of two sizes, 2.5 inch (for laptop hard drives) or 3.5 inch for hard drives that come out of desktop computers. The cost ranges from 40 to 60 dollars. This might sound like a lot of money for something that simply encloses your hard drive but this cost covers the included electronics that operate the hard drive and allow it to communicate with your new computer through a USB port.

After purchasing an enclosure, you will have to remove the hard drive from your old computer. This is pretty straight forward for most laptops. The compartment that houses the hard drive is usually accessible from the bottom of the laptop. Usually, a couple of screws hold down the cover to the hard drive compartment. Once you remove that cover, you should have no problem gently sliding the hard drive back to separate it from its connector.

What you remove from underneath the laptop is usually the hard drive encased in a metal bracket. If the hard drive looks like it wouldn't fit into the newly purchased enclosure, it most likely still has the old bracket attached. Detach the bracket from the hard drive by removing several small screws. After removing the bracket, slip the hard drive into your new hard drive enclosure. Instructions for doing this should be included with the enclosure.

Now you can connect the enclosed hard drive to your new computer with a standard USB cable. Some drives require a special USB Y-cable that should have been included in the hard drive enclosure kit.

Working with an old desktop computer is similar. However, make sure you get a hard drive enclosure designed for a 3.5 inch drive. Also, getting the drive out of your old computer is a bit more involved. Instructions on opening your computer can usually be found in the owner's manual. Check with the manufacturer or search for the computer's manual by using the Retrevo search engine at: <http://www.retrevo.com>.

Thanks for listening. This is Walter Gajewski for Tech Tips.