Please tell me the proper way to back up my hard drive. I have not done it and I have added new programs and want to do it the correct way.

There is a backup program in XP although XP doesn't make it easy to find....probably because it doesn't work any better than the older versions of MS backup.

There are a number of imaging programs that can be purchased such as Norton's Ghost which will create an image of your hard drive and in event of hard drive failure, when your hard drive is repaired, you can then restore that image right back to that hard drive. This requires that you have lots of storage space available. I prefer a simpler route.

What I recommend is this
1. Keep all your install disks in a safe place in case you have a hard drive failure, you can reinstall after repair or replacement of the hard drive.
2. Make a set of Recovery Disks for your computer in case your computer won't start and you can't get to the Recovery that is on a partition of your c:\ drive...unless of course you were fortunate enough to have gotten Recovery disks with your computer.
3. Any programs, drivers,etc that you download from web sites, download to the DOWNLOAD folder you create under MY DOCUMENTS. If you need to reinstall those you'll have them.
4. All Pictures and Documents you create, should be saved in a folder you create under MY DOCUMENTS or in a folder you create under the MY PICTURES folder in the MY DOCUMENTS FOLDER.

With all the above said, you are now ready to do your backup...which is to copy the MY DOCUMENTS either to an external hard drive, to a CD or send it via a network to another computer on your network. This way, should a crash occur you have the option to:

1. Do a System Restore back to a date when all was well, if your computer will start to SAFE MODE.
2. Use the Recovery Disk to just recover the Applications if the problem is with corrupted files in the OS.
3. Or worse scenario is to do a full Format and Recovery using your Recovery disks which means wiping the hard drive clean and then the recovery disk will reinstall the OS and programs just like it came from the factory. In this case, you will then need to reinstall any programs you have added to your computer. AND copy back the MY DOCUMENTS FOLDER to replace the MY DOCUMENTS folder on your clean formatted machine. And also, remember to update your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs once reinstalled.

What I have elected to do is to invest in an external Hard drive and I save everything to it as I create stuff rather than saving to my C:\ drive. About every 3 months, I move a copy of the My Documents folder to another computer on my network into a folder I call Laptop backup, replacing the one stored that on last backup, then I compress and copy the contents of MY DOCUMENTS folder to CDs. Just in case.

It works for me.

Revised 5/30/20096 JMM