

Shadow Copy - what it is, why it helps, and how to use Previous Versions safely

Gridinsoft Help Center

What it is

Shadow copy is a built-in Windows feature that takes quick snapshots of files and folders. These snapshots capture how your data looked at a moment in time, so you can roll back to an earlier version if something goes wrong. Think of it like a time machine for your files on the same drive.

Why it matters

If you delete or overwrite a file by accident, or malware scrambles it, you can restore an earlier version in seconds. It is especially handy during ransomware cleanups when you need yesterday's copy.

How it works

- Windows creates snapshots during updates, restore points, or on a schedule.
- Snapshots live on the same disk and are read-only.
- You can right-click a file or folder -> Properties -> Previous Versions to restore.
- Tools like System Restore can roll back system files and settings.

Red flags

- Previous Versions tab is empty when you expect copies.
- Ransomware or scripts that run commands like deleting shadow copies.
- Low disk space causing Windows to prune old snapshots.
- Drive errors or a recent reset that removed restore points.

Do it right

- Turn on System Protection for your system drive and make a manual restore point before big changes.
- Keep regular backups too. Shadow copies are not a full backup and won't help if the disk dies.
- Leave some free space so Windows can keep snapshots.
- After a malware incident, restore only after you have cleaned the system.