

Turn your old laptop into **your own Google Photos.**

A free, step-by-step guide to backing up every photo from every phone in your family, without paying for cloud storage every month.

CLOUD STORAGE

Every month

Same space, a new bill, forever.

YOUR OLD LAPTOP

₹0 a month

Just a little electricity.

Ubuntu

the operating system



CasaOS

the app store

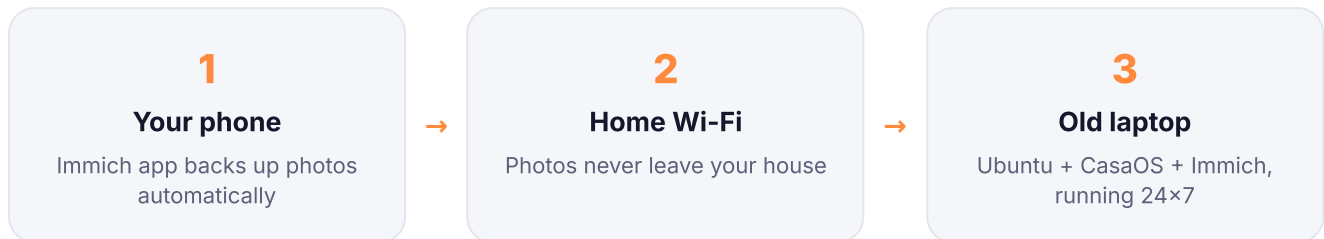


Immich

your photo cloud

What you're building

Your phone sends its photos to the laptop over your home Wi-Fi. The laptop stays on, quietly, and keeps every photo safe in an app that looks and works like Google Photos.



What you need

- ☐ A 64-bit laptop. Immich needs at least **6 GB RAM** (8 GB is better) and 2 CPU cores (4 is better).
- ☐ A big enough disk for your photos, plus 10–20% extra for thumbnails.
- ☐ A USB pendrive, 8 GB or bigger. It will be erased.
- ☐ The laptop charger, and a spot near your Wi-Fi router.
- ☐ Another computer or phone to download things.
- ☐ About 2 hours of patience.

The 5 steps

- 1** **Install Ubuntu** on the laptop
- 2** **Set it up as a server:** lid closed, no sleep
- 3** **Install CasaOS** with one command
- 4** **Install Immich** from the CasaOS app store
- 5** **Connect your phone** and start the backup

Installing Ubuntu erases the laptop.

Copy anything you want to keep off the laptop first. If Windows had BitLocker turned on, turn it off before you begin.

Check the battery.

The laptop will stay plugged in all the time. If the battery looks swollen, or the case is bulging, remove the battery or don't use that laptop.

This guide works at home.

Your phone backs up whenever it's on your home Wi-Fi. Backing up from outside the house needs extra setup, which this guide doesn't cover.



ABOUT 45 MINUTES

Install Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a free operating system, like Windows. It's light, stable and perfect for a laptop that will run all day.

- 1 **Download Ubuntu 24.04 LTS Desktop** from ubuntu.com/download/desktop. LTS means it gets updates for years. Only download it from the official site.
- 2 **Make a bootable pendrive.** On your other computer, install **balenaEtcher** (the tool Ubuntu recommends), choose the Ubuntu file, choose your pendrive and click **Flash**.
- 3 **Boot the laptop from the pendrive.** Plug it in and restart. Tap the boot-menu key as it starts. That's usually **F12** (Esc, F2 or F10 on some laptops; many Lenovos also have a small Novo button). Pick the USB drive.
- 4 **Install.** Choose **Install Ubuntu**, then **Erase disk and install Ubuntu**. This laptop is now dedicated to your photos.
- 5 **Create your user** and pick a password you'll remember. Tick **Log in automatically** so it comes back by itself after a power cut.
- 6 **Update everything** once it starts: open **Terminal** (Ctrl + Alt + T) and run:

```
sudo apt update && sudo apt upgrade -y
```

WATCH IT DONE



How to Install Ubuntu 24.04 Desktop: Complete Beginner's Guide

Learn Linux TV

youtube.com/watch?v=zE7OYNkuQ1w



How to Install Ubuntu 24.04.1 LTS: Create a Bootable USB & Discover New Features

youtube.com/watch?v=66IAEOK65Fc

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Install Ubuntu Desktop (official Ubuntu tutorial)

ubuntu.com/tutorials/install-ubuntu-desktop

Safest way to do this

Download only from ubuntu.com, flash with balenaEtcher, and choose "Erase disk" so there's no confusing dual-boot setup.

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ABOUT 10 MINUTES

Make it a server

A laptop normally sleeps when you close the lid. A server shouldn't. These settings keep it running quietly, lid closed, all day.

Keep running with the lid closed

Open the settings file:

```
sudo nano /etc/systemd/logind.conf
```

Find these two lines, remove the `#` at the start, and set them to **ignore**:

```
HandleLidSwitch=ignore  
HandleLidSwitchExternalPower=ignore
```

Save with **Ctrl + O**, Enter, then exit with **Ctrl + X**. Apply it:

```
sudo systemctl restart systemd-logind
```

Never go to sleep

```
sudo systemctl mask sleep.target suspend.target hibernate.target hybrid-sleep.target
```

Find the laptop's address

```
hostname -I
```

The first number, something like **192.168.1.50**, is your laptop's address on your home network. Write it down; you'll use it in steps 3, 4 and 5.

Make the address permanent

Open your Wi-Fi router's settings page and look for **DHCP reservation** or **Static IP**. Reserve this address for the laptop, so your phone can always find it.

Where to put it

Somewhere with air flow, close to the router. An ethernet cable is faster and more reliable than Wi-Fi if you can run one.

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ABOUT 10 MINUTES

Install CasaOS

CasaOS turns the laptop into a simple home server with an app store. You install apps like Immich with one click instead of typing commands.

- 1 Open **Terminal** on the laptop and run the official install command:

```
curl -fsSL https://get.casaos.io | sudo bash
```

- 2 Wait a few minutes. When it finishes, it prints the address of your dashboard.
- 3 On **any** computer or phone at home, open a browser and go to **http://YOUR-LAPTOP-ADDRESS** (for example <http://192.168.1.50>).
- 4 Create your CasaOS account. You'll see the dashboard with your storage and the **App Store**.

Only run install commands from the official source.

The command above comes from casaos.zimaspace.com. Never paste a command from a random comment or video description.

WATCH IT DONE



Install CasaOS on Ubuntu 24.04: The Ultimate Simple Home Server Dashboard

youtube.com/watch?v=83e58mGAjCM



How to install CasaOS on Ubuntu

youtube.com/watch?v=AjMGwqKleLM

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CasaOS official website and docs

casaos.zimaspace.com



ABOUT 15 MINUTES

Install Immich

Immich is a free, open-source photo app that works like Google Photos: timeline, albums, search, face recognition and automatic phone backup.

- 1 In the CasaOS dashboard, open the **App Store** and search for **Immich**.
- 2 Click **Install** and wait. It downloads several parts, so give it a few minutes.
- 3 Click the **Immich** icon on your dashboard. It opens in a new tab. **Copy the address** from the browser bar (for example `http://192.168.1.50:2283`). That's your server address for the phone.
- 4 Create the **admin account**. The first account you make is the owner.
- 5 Under **Administration → Users**, create a separate account for each family member, so everyone gets their own private library.

WATCH IT DONE



How to install Immich on CasaOS using BigBearCasaOS

youtube.com/watch?v=Zlx2jDHYjjE



Ultimate Immich Self-Hosting Guide: Ditch Google Photos / iCloud

youtube.com/watch?v=V5KfHd-uotM

OFFICIAL GUIDE

DOC

Immich documentation

docs.immich.app

Seeing a different app store?

Some videos use a community app store called BigBearCasaOS. The steps are almost the same: find Immich, install, open.

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ABOUT 5 MINUTES, THEN LET IT RUN

Connect your phone

This is the fun part. Install the app, point it at your laptop, and watch every photo move in.

- 1 Install **Immich** from the App Store (iPhone) or Play Store (Android).
- 2 Make sure the phone is on your **home Wi-Fi**.
- 3 Enter the **server address** from Step 4 (for example `http://192.168.1.50:2283`) and log in.
- 4 Tap the **cloud icon** at the top, choose which albums to back up (Recents or All), and turn on **backup**.
- 5 Leave the app open and the phone charging for the first backup. Thousands of photos can take a few hours.
- 6 Open the **sync / backup status** and wait until it says everything is backed up.

Only free up phone space after two checks.

First, open a few old photos in Immich from another device and make sure they really are there. Second, keep a second copy (see the next page). Then use Immich's **Free up space** option to remove backed-up photos from your phone.

Try the search

Type things like *"sunrise on the beach"* or *"birthday cake"*. Immich's smart search finds photos by what's in them. Face recognition groups people automatically after the first scan finishes.

iPhone tip

iOS limits background backups. Open the Immich app now and then, and new photos will upload within seconds.

Don't skip this page

An old laptop is one disk. Disks fail. A little care keeps your memories safe for years.

Keep a second copy

Once a month, copy the Immich photo folder to an external hard drive and keep that drive somewhere else. One copy is a backup; two copies is peace of mind.

Update carefully

Before updating Immich, read its release notes. Some updates need extra steps. Don't update in the middle of a big backup.

Keep it cool

Leave space around the vents and keep the laptop off soft surfaces like beds and sofas.

Keep it on

Plug it into a surge protector. After a power cut it should start again by itself; if it doesn't, press the power button.



Don't Break Immich! Update It Safely (Beginner Guide)

[youtube.com/watch?v=dAlnzdlJtyg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAlnzdlJtyg)

SOMETHING NOT WORKING?

PROBLEM	TRY THIS
Laptop won't boot from the pendrive	Try another boot key (F12, Esc, F2, F10). In the BIOS, turn off Secure Boot only if the USB still doesn't show up. Re-flash the pendrive.
CasaOS page won't open	Check the address with <code>hostname -I</code> . Make sure both devices are on the same Wi-Fi. Type http:// , not https.
Phone app can't reach the server	Include the port number (like :2283). Turn off mobile data and VPN while testing.
Laptop goes to sleep or stops when the lid closes	Re-check Step 2 and restart the laptop.
Backup is slow	Keep the app open and the phone charging. Use ethernet on the laptop if you can. The first backup is the slow one.

YOU DID IT

No more "Storage Full." No more monthly bill.

Your family's photos now live in your house, on a laptop that was gathering dust. Comment and tell me how it went, or what you want me to build next.

Ep. 1 · Old tablet → motion game console

Ep. 2 · Old laptop → photo cloud

Tutorial videos are made by independent creators and are linked here for convenience. Official guides: ubuntu.com, casaos.zimaspace.com, docs.immich.app. Follow these steps at your own risk and always keep a backup of your photos.