

# APPENDIX E: MAINTAINING YOUR QUICKEN DATA FILE

- ▶ Archiving and Compacting a File
- ▶ Copying a File
- ▶ Renaming a File

Keeping your entire financial history (since you started using Quicken, anyway) in your data file is a tantalizing idea. You can, for example, look up how much it cost to gas up your car a year ago, create a budget based on past spending, or simply gloat over the exponential increase in your income. But slogging through all that data eventually makes Quicken run slower.

You can avoid the slowdown by buying a PC with a blazing-fast processor and ginormous hard drive—or by keeping your Quicken data file in neat, trimmed-down condition. In fact, even if you have a computer that’s the envy of your geek support group, there are plenty of good reasons to regularly maintain and archive your data file. For example, archiving your data file as of December 31 of each year lets you keep a copy of your file as it was when you prepared your tax return, which can be a huge help (if small comfort) in an IRS audit. (See the box on page 423 for more advice.) Or you can make a copy of your data file before you make significant (or experimental) changes to it.

Quicken provides several commands for cleaning up your data files. This chapter explains the subtle differences between each method—and the best times to use each one.

## Archiving and Compacting a File

The Year-End Copy command is like two commands in one. With it, you can create an archive copy of your data file as of a specific date—perfect for freezing your data to show the IRS how you arrived at the numbers you reported. But you can also use Year-End Copy to remove older transactions, effectively decluttering your data file. Depending on how much detritus you clear away, you can cut your file size by a third or more.

The Year-End Copy command doesn’t remove *all* transactions prior to the date you specify. It hangs on to investment transactions, regardless of how old they are, so you can evaluate your investment performance over time. Furthermore, Quicken assumes that you don’t want to remove transactions until you’ve reconciled them (see Chapter 7), so it keeps all uncleared transactions.

## It's All in the Timing

The Year-End Copy command sounds like the ultimate no-brainer: Mark your calendar, and at 11:59 p.m. on December 31, do it. But that may be the worst possible time to make a year-end copy. Creating a truly useful year-end archive is all about timing and patience.

You don't want to archive the previous year until you're done making belated changes. So at least wait until you've reconciled all of your accounts through

the end of the year. It's also a good idea to wait for the year-end statements and W-2s you receive from your employer, in case you have to adjust your earnings, deductions, or values in your 401(k) account. Finally, preparing tax returns often uncovers transactions that you want to recategorize. Anachronistic as it may seem, the best time to create a year-end copy of your Quicken data file could be as late as April each year.

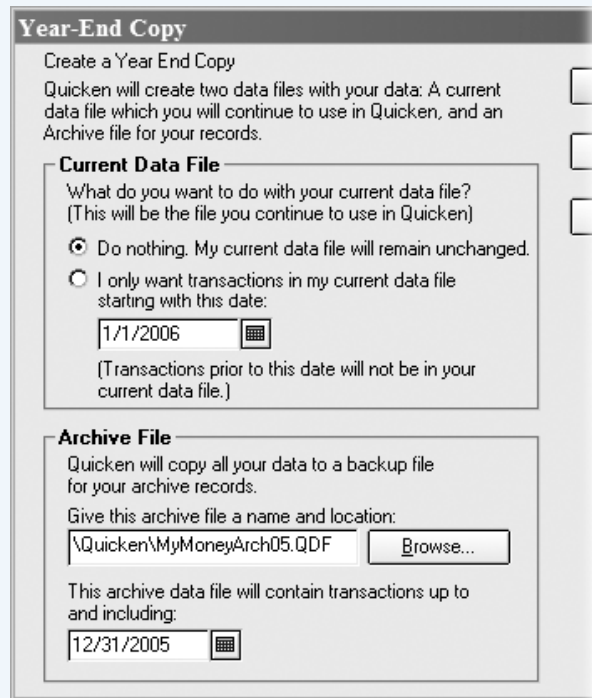


**Tip:** If you don't reconcile regularly, the Copy command (page 424) is another option, since it lets you toss out old, *uncleared* transactions. The Copy command also lets you remove investment transactions.

The Year-End Copy dialog box, shown in Figure E-1, has several choices, but they really boil down to one of two tasks. You can create a copy of your current data file and do nothing more, or you can create a copy *and* clean out old transactions in the data file you use. Either way, Year-End Copy creates a copy of your current data file for your records and lets you choose a place to save it.

Here's when to choose each option:

- ▶ **Create an archive file.** Select Do Nothing if you want an archive copy of your data for tax records or to see all your transactions through the end of the calendar year. For example, with an archive copy for every year, you can easily choose the right file to find a 2002 purchase. Quicken creates an archive copy



**Figure E-1.** The Year-End Copy command creates an archive copy of your current data file as of a date that you specify. You can also tell it to clean out older transactions to shrink the size of your file.

of your data file with transactions up to and including a specific date. But the program leaves your current data file alone, so you can continue to work with transactions going back several years.

- ▶ **Create an archive *and* slim down your data file.** Select “I only want transactions in my current data file starting with this date” to remove old transactions from your current data file. You specify the date and Quicken cleans out earlier transactions. If you also want to keep a copy of your data file with all transactions intact, be sure to back up your data file before archiving.

Here are the steps to creating a year-end copy of your data:

## Reconciling Cash Accounts

Cash accounts don't include a command for reconciling, mainly because there's no statement to compare your cash spending to. However, when you're trying to clean up your Quicken file, you need a way to "reconcile" old cash transactions, because the Year-End Copy won't remove them otherwise. With several years of petty cash purchases, the prospect of manually changing the status of each transaction to Reconciled isn't pretty. Sure enough, you can solve this problem with an astute application of the Update Balance command.

When you update the balance in an account, Quicken marks as reconciled all of the transactions earlier than the update date. Suppose you want the Year-End Copy to remove cash transactions up to the end of 2005. You can use the Update Balance command in each cash account and set the date to 12/31/2005. For all the cash transactions through 12/31/2005, Quicken changes the value in the Clr field to *R*—precisely what you need to delete those transactions during the Year-End Copy.

### 1. With your data file open, choose **File** → **File Operations** → **Year-End Copy**.

Quicken opens the Year-End Copy dialog box and automatically sets the dates to archive the previous year's transactions and remove them from the current data file. For example, if it's the middle of 2006, the program sets the Current Data File date to 1/1/2006 and the Archive File date to 12/31/2005. These dates remove transactions prior to 2006 while creating an archive data file that contains the transactions that you removed.

### 2. In the **Current Data File** section, choose the option for the tasks you want Quicken to perform.

Choose Do Nothing to create an archive copy only. To create a copy and clean up your current file, choose the "I only want transactions in my current data file starting with this date" option.

If you want to clean out older transactions, in the date box, fill in the earliest date for transactions you want to keep. Although Quicken automatically sets this date to January 1 of the current calendar year, you can change this date to whatever date you want. (January 1 is a popular choice because it gives you a full calendar year of data.) For example, in 2006, if you want to keep up to two years of transactions, type 1/1/2005.

- 3. In the Archive File section, in the “Give this archive file a name and location” text box, specify the path and filename for your archive.**

Quicken automatically chooses the folder that contains your current data file and appends *BKP* to the filename. To identify the file as an archive, change the filename prefix. For example, for an archive of the 2005 calendar year, you might change *MyMoneyBKP.QDF* to *MyMoneyArch05.QDF*.

If you want to store all your archive files in the same folder, click Browse. Then, in the Copy Quicken File dialog box, choose the folder you want. For instance, you might create a subfolder called Archives.

- 4. In the “This archive data file will contain transactions up to and including” box, type the latest date for transactions in the archive file.**

To store last year’s data, choose 12/31 of the previous calendar year.

- 5. Click OK.**

You’ll see a dialog box showing Quicken’s progress as it creates the archive copy. The time you get to stare at this message depends on your computer’s speed and free space, and the size of your data file. But hang in there; eventually, the File Archived Successfully dialog box appears, as shown in Figure E-2.

- 6. Select the file you want to open and then click OK.**

Quicken automatically selects the Current File option, so in most cases, all you have to do is click OK. The program opens your current data file.



**Figure E-2.** To get back to work, leave the Current File option and click OK. To open the archive file to add a password, select the Archive File option and then click OK.

Basically, the only reason Quicken gives you the Archive File option in the final step is so you can add a password to the archive file (see earlier in this appendix), and then close it immediately. Archive files are historical records of your finances, and rewriting history is not a good idea (even if Quicken does make that possible).

With your data file open—now a leaner data file, if you removed older transactions—you’re ready to get back to work.

## UP TO SPEED

### When Attachments Don’t

If you take advantage of the 2006 feature that lets you attach check images and electronic bank statements to transactions and accounts (page 109), your data file can grow quite large. When you copy a data file that contains attachments like these, Quicken first copies your data. The program then copies the attachments *only if* your backup media has enough room for all of the attachments.

If your backup media (CD, Zip disk, floppy disk, or external hard drive) runs out of space, the program won’t copy any attachments, so it’s a good idea to check the available space before you begin the archive. Either that, or don’t get too attached to your attachments.

## Copying a File

The Copy command uses your current data file as the foundation for a new data file and lets you choose a date range for the transactions in the copy. If that sounds strikingly similar to the Year-End Copy, you're right. But the Copy command can help you in ways that Year-End Copy never dreamed of. Here are some things you can do with data files created with the Copy command:

- ▶ **Shrink a data file to a more manageable size.** You can create a copy of your data file that contains the transactions going back as near or far as you want. The advantage of the Copy command over Year-End Copy is that you can tell Quicken *not* to keep uncleared transactions or old investment transactions. For example, there's no need to keep transactions for mutual funds that you've already sold and paid capital gains tax on.



**Note:** You can't selectively choose which accounts to clean up, so you may be better off keeping all your investment transactions, including the old ones. For example, if you get rid of investment transactions, you may lose the information you need to calculate your cost basis on some of your investments.

- ▶ **Start (almost) from scratch.** With the Copy command, you can create a data file that contains your categories, scheduled transactions, memorized payees, and other lists—but is devoid of actual transactions. This is incredibly helpful if you want to create a new data file but don't want to recreate your setup. (For instance, you may want to create a data file for your parents' finances that uses the same categories you know and love.)
- ▶ **Create an archive file of any date range you want.** By choosing the starting and ending date for transactions, you can archive your data file between any two dates (like the dates of your marriage and divorce).

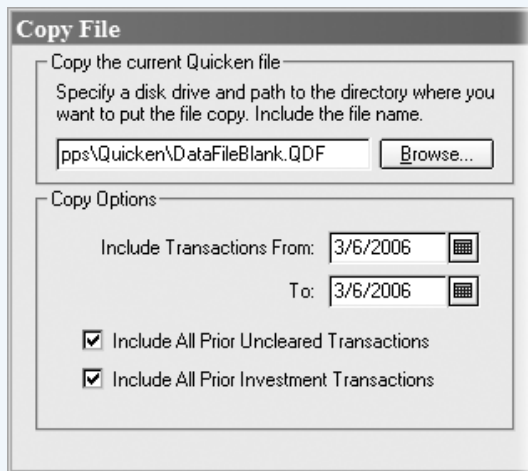


**Note:** The Copy command doesn't change your current data file in any way.

Here are the steps for copying a file:

**1. With your data file open, choose File → File Operations → Copy.**

Quicken opens the Copy File dialog box, shown in Figure E-3, and automatically sets values in all text boxes and checkboxes. In most cases, you'll want to change the values the program provides, as you'll learn in the following steps.



**Figure E-3.** Although Quicken fills in all the boxes, you'll probably want to change the settings before creating a copy.

**2. In the “Copy the current Quicken file” text box, change the filename.**

Quicken uses the same folder that contains the current data file and automatically appends *Cpy* to your data file's name. If you're using copy to create a data file for someone else, change the name accordingly. If you're creating a super-squeaky-clean data file, change the name to something like *DataFile-Template.QDF*.

If you want to store the copy in a different folder, click Browse and choose the folder.

**3. In the Include Transactions From text box, type the earliest date for transactions you want to keep in the file.**

For example, to create a file that contains a few years of transactions, you might type *1/1/2004*. If you want to create a file with no transactions, leave the current date that Quicken filled in.

**4. In the To text box, type the latest date for transactions.**

To create a file that has transactions up to today, leave the date that Quicken filled in. If you want to create an archive up to the end of the previous year, type that date instead.

**5. If necessary, turn off the Include All Prior Uncleared Transactions checkbox.**

Quicken automatically turns on this checkbox, so that the copy keeps transactions that you haven't reconciled. However, if you're using the Copy command because you want to eliminate years of unreconciled cash transactions, turn off this checkbox. The program creates an account balance as of the Include Transactions From date, in place of the removed transactions.

**6. If necessary, turn off the Include All Prior Investment Transactions checkbox.**

Quicken automatically turns on this checkbox, keeping investment transactions regardless of their age. Turn off this checkbox only if you're certain you don't need investment transactions.

**7. Click OK.**

Quicken begins copying your data file (and your hard drive starts making noises). Eventually, the File Copied Successfully dialog box appears.

## 8. Choose the file you want to open; click OK.

Quicken automatically selects the Original File option, so simply click OK to continue using your data file.

To instead open the copy you just created, choose the New copy option, and then click OK.



**Tip:** Besides the Copy command and Year-End Copy, you can also move Quicken data around by exporting it. Although exporting is generally used for transferring Quicken information to another program, you can also try exporting data, one account at a time, in an attempt to correct a corrupted data file, as described in Appendix D.

## Renaming a File

You may not use the Rename command very often, but sometimes it's invaluable. For example, if you went along with Quicken's file naming suggestion and have a data file called QDATA.QDF, you can use the Rename command to change its name to something more meaningful, such as MarshaMoney.QDF.

The Rename command is the most dependable way to change the name of a Quicken data file. Because a Quicken data file is actually a collection of several separate files, the Rename command takes care of renaming all of them. If you rename in Windows, you may miss one and lose important data.

To rename a file, choose File → File Operations → Rename. The Rename Quicken File dialog box opens. When you choose one of the files in the list, Quicken uses that name to fill in the "File name" text box. Then, in the New Name For Quicken File, type the new name you want. When you click OK, the program changes all of the filenames for you. (It doesn't, however, rename backups or archive files that you've created from your data file.)



**Tip:** If you've already changed the name of your .qdf file in Windows (by right-clicking it and choosing Rename from the shortcut menu, for example), you wouldn't be the first. The easiest fix is to use Windows to rename the .qdf file back to its original name, and *then* use Quicken's Rename command.