

Where can I find the Win32DiskImager to download it and use it as a backup tool? Do I have to log in or join any clubs?

You can download **Win32 Disk Imager** for free from its official project page. No login, no club

membership, nothing like that required.



Best place to download it

The official project page is hosted by the **SourceForge** open-source repository.

Just go to the Win32 Disk Imager project page there and download the installer. The file is usually named something like:

win32diskimager-setup.exe

(to find -- put win32 disk imager in search field)

Basic download steps

1. Go to the Win32 Disk Imager project page on SourceForge.
2. Click **Download**.
3. Save the installer file.
4. Run the installer and follow the prompts.

That's it. No account needed.

Why it's popular

A lot of **Raspberry Pi** users (including people running **Pi-Star** hotspots) use it because it:

- Makes an **exact image** of a microSD card
- Lets you **restore that image quickly**
- Is **simple and reliable**

One quick safety tip

When you run it:

- Always **double-check the drive letter** before clicking **Write**.
It will overwrite whatever drive you select.
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If you'd like, I can also show you the **one-minute trick many Pi-Star users use to keep a**



“golden backup” SD card ready at all times—super handy if a card ever dies.

Yes.

Alright—this is a **really handy trick** a lot of Raspberry Pi hotspot users do, especially if they run **Pi-Star**. The idea is to keep a **“golden spare” microSD card** ready so if the main card ever fails, you're back on the air in about a minute.

Here's the simple method.

Step 1 — Build Your Perfect Working Card

Set up your Pi-Star card exactly how you like it:

- Callsign configured
- DMR ID entered
- Wi-Fi working
- Talkgroups set
- Hotspot tested and running perfectly

Once everything is working **exactly right**, shut down the Pi properly.

Step 2 — Make a Master Image

Insert that microSD card into your computer and open Win32 Disk Imager.

1. Select a file location.
2. Name the image something like:

pistar_master_backup.img

3. Select the SD card drive letter.
4. Click **READ**.

Now you have a **perfect snapshot of your working system**.

Step 3 — Clone a Spare Card

Insert a **new microSD card**.

In Win32 Disk Imager:

1. Select your saved **.img** file.
2. Choose the new card drive letter.
3. Click **WRITE**.

Now that spare card is an **exact clone**.

Step 4 — Label It

This is important.

Write on the card or put it in a small bag:

Pi-Star Backup
Tested March 2026

Store it near the hotspot.

Step 5 — If Your Main Card Dies

Just:

1. Pull the bad card
2. Insert the backup
3. Power up the Pi

Your hotspot will boot **exactly the same** as before.



Total downtime: **about 60 seconds**.



Extra trick many hams do

Every few months:

1. Update Pi-Star
2. Confirm everything works
3. Create a **new backup image**

That way the spare card always has your **latest configuration**.

If you want, I can also show you a **very common mistake people make with Win32 Disk Imager that ruins a backup image** (and it happens to a lot of Pi-Star users the first time). It's easy to avoid once you know it.

OK.

Good—this is the mistake that trips up a lot of folks the first time they back up a **Pi-Star** card.

[The Common Mistake](#)

People think the **Pi-Star backup file** created from the Pi-Star dashboard is a **bootable image**.

It isn't.

The backup you download from Pi-Star usually looks like something like:

pistar-config-backup.zip

That file only contains:

- your callsign
- DMR ID
- network settings
- talkgroups
- configuration files

It **does NOT contain the operating system or boot partitions**.

So when someone tries to restore that file using **Balena Etcher** or **Win32 Disk Imager**, they get errors like:

- *missing image path extension*
- *not a bootable image*
- *does not contain a partition table*

Exactly the error you mentioned earlier.

The Correct Way to Use a Pi-Star Backup

You restore that file **inside Pi-Star**, not with an imaging program.

Proper process

1. Flash a **fresh Pi-Star image** onto the microSD card.
2. Boot the Pi.
3. Log into the Pi-Star dashboard.
4. Go to **Configuration → Expert → Backup / Restore**.
5. Upload the backup **.zip**.

Pi-Star then restores all your settings.

When Win32 Disk Imager IS the Right Tool

Use **Win32 Disk Imager** when you want a **complete clone of the entire SD card**, including:

- operating system
- boot files
- configurations
- logs
- everything

That creates a file like:

pistar_full_clone.img

That is bootable and can be written directly to another card.



Simple rule to remember

File Type	Tool to Use
.zip Pi-Star backup	Restore inside Pi-Star
.img disk image	Win32 Disk Imager



One more tip  p most Pi-Star hotspot owners don't realize:

If you clone a **32GB card**, the **.img** file will also be **32GB**, even if the Pi-Star system only uses about **3–4GB**. There's a neat trick to shrink those images down to about **4GB**, which makes backups much faster.