Why should you care about good Research Data Management (RDM)? With good RDM you can fulfil funder requirements, keep your data accurate and reliable, and make sure that you minimise your risk of losing data halfway through your project. Sounds good right? Here are some top tips on how to manage your data effectively:

1. Start planning your research management early

You may not think you have to have a plan in place but the earlier you start the better off you will be. Many funders require a research data management plan before they will even approve a grant. Even if this isn't a funding requirement, Future You will thank Past You for preparing ahead, trust me. There are tools out there to help such as the Digital Curation Centre's DMPonline.

2. Check out your funder or institution's research data management guidance

This can give you some really good pointers and ideas on where to start before you even begin collecting your data. The University of Cambridge has lots of funder guidance on its data management pages.

3. Think about the lifecycle of your data

All research has a lifecycle from planning all the way through to publishing so take some time to think about how you can plan for each stage of this cycle. The UK Data Archive has some great advice on this.

4. Identify people who can help you plan your data management strategy

There are lots of people who can help you and great places to start would be the Information & Library Services team, the IT team and the Research Office.

5. Consider what types of data you will create

What is the nature of your data and what formats will it be stored in?

6. Make sure you know who owns the data

Who owns the data that you create and what will be your intellectual property rights to that data? You may own it but it may also be owned by your institution and/or funder.

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7. Think about short-term storage of your data

Once you've figured out the sorts of data you'll be creating, thinking about how you are going to store it is the next step. Important things to consider can be:

- Backing up your research onto something more secure than one USB stick

- Using cloud storage such as Office 365's OneDrive

- Not storing sensitive data in unsecure cloud storage like DropBox

- Making sure that your files are named in ways that will make sense to you in a few months' time but also other researchers who may be working on the same project

- Try to save any research into formats that will work in future without specialist software or saving in compatibility mode

8. Think about long-term storage of your data

When your research is over, what happens to your data? Think about if it should be archived for long-term preservation and sharing with other researchers. This may be required by your funder or institution. There are many archives where you can deposit data such as the University of Cambridge's repository and the UK Data Archive.

9. Have a 'hit-by-a-bus' plan

As much as we hate to think about it but what would happen to all of that research if one day we couldn't log in to our PC or share a critical folder with someone because we had been hit by a bus? Well it has happened and whole datasets have been lost as a result so have a back-up plan and nominate someone other than you who can look after your data if you are incapacitated at any point during your research lifecycle.

10. Converting your data into Open Data

You may have heard a lot about Open Access but what about Open Data? Open data often means depositing your data in an archive so other researchers can access it and use it to inform their research.

While not suitable for sensitive data, making your data sharable in this way not only ensures that it survives past your research project but it also helps others with their work, and guarantees that your original work is also cited. Good examples of repositories for data include the University of Cambridge's repository, Apollo, the UK Data Archive, and the Economic and Social Data Service. You can also use data from these places for your research right now!