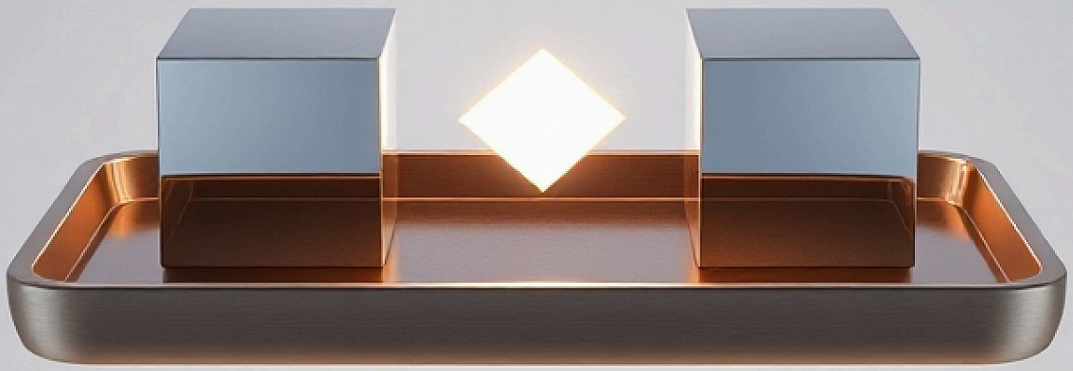
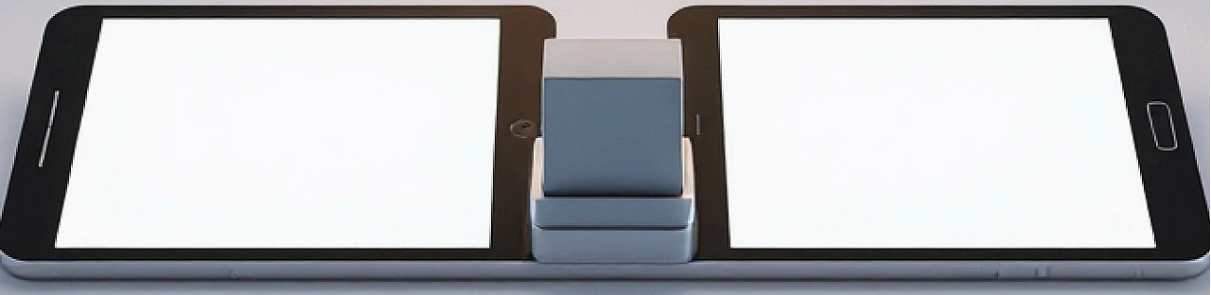
What is the difference between backup and synchronization?





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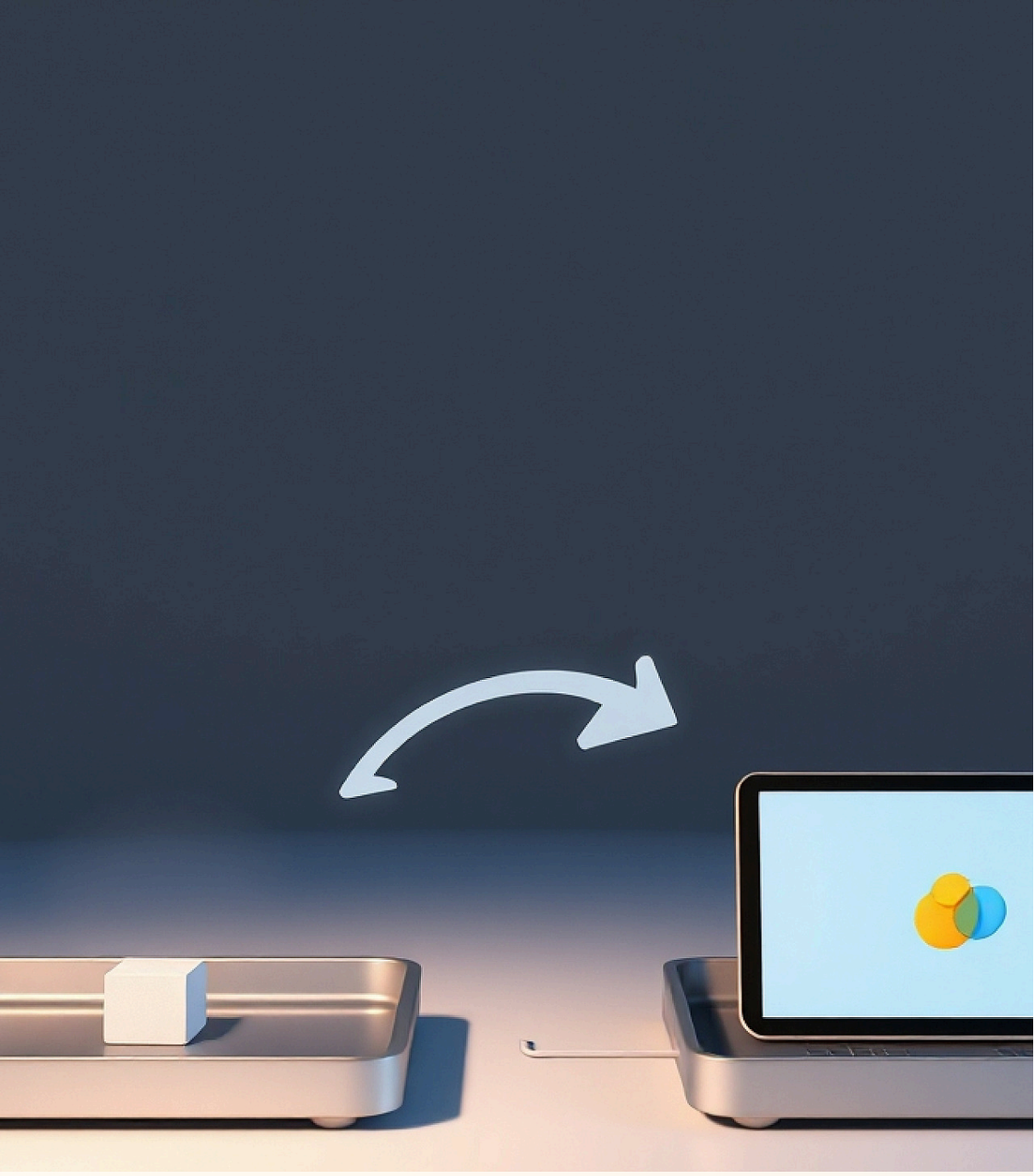
You have probably seen both words, backup and synchronization, used for saving files, and you want to know how they differ. The short answer: synchronization keeps files in different places consistent with each other, while backup aims to restore a past or separate copy when you need it. This book explains each idea step by step, starting from zero. By the end, you will know which feature you have and why it matters.



Synchronization means making files in different places match each other. When a file changes in one place, the other places are updated to match that change. Think of two folders on two computers set to sync: add a photo to one folder, and the photo appears in the other folder too. The goal is that every place shows the same current content.



Picture the same file on two devices kept identical by synchronization. There is still only one current version of that file, just shown in more than one place. If you edit a note on your laptop, the synced copy on your phone updates to the same text. You do not get two versions; you get one version mirrored in two locations.



Deletions spread too. When you delete a file in one synchronized place, that deletion can also be reflected on the other devices. Synchronization copies all changes, including removals, so the places stay consistent. Remove a picture from one synced folder, and it can disappear from the other folder as well. This is normal behavior for synchronization.



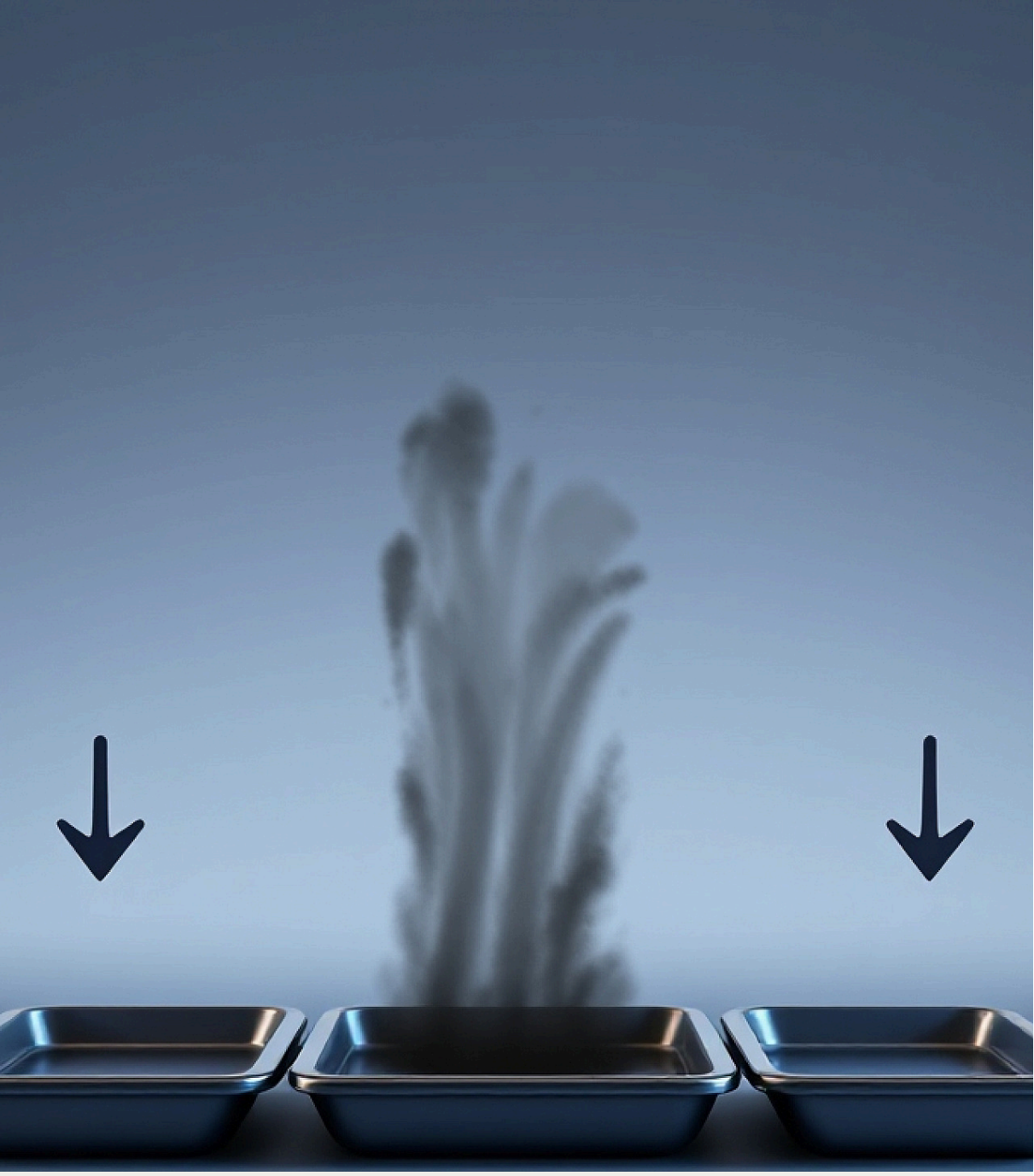
A backup is a separate or past copy kept for later. Its purpose is to bring something back when you need it, not to keep current files matching. For example, you might copy important documents to an external drive once a week. That drive holds an older copy that stays put even if your main files change or disappear.



A backup lets you return to an older version of a file. Suppose you rewrite a report many times over a month, and your backup service saves a copy each day. You can open the backup from two weeks ago and see the report as it was then. Synchronization does not give you this; it only keeps the current version the same everywhere.



Follow an example: a document was changed by mistake, and the good text was replaced with errors. If you have an old backup from before the mistake, you can recover the earlier good version. You open the backup, find the file, and restore it. The mistaken change is undone because the backup kept a past copy.



Synchronization alone would have spread the mistaken change to every device. If your laptop, phone, and tablet all sync, the bad edit made on one device quickly appears on the others. Synchronization keeps things consistent, but it does not keep them recoverable. It has no memory of the earlier good version once the change is synced.



Compare the two goals side by side. Synchronization aims for consistency now: all places show the same current files. Backup aims for recovery later: a past or separate copy is available when something goes wrong. One keeps things matching; the other keeps something to go back to. They solve different problems, so one does not replace the other.



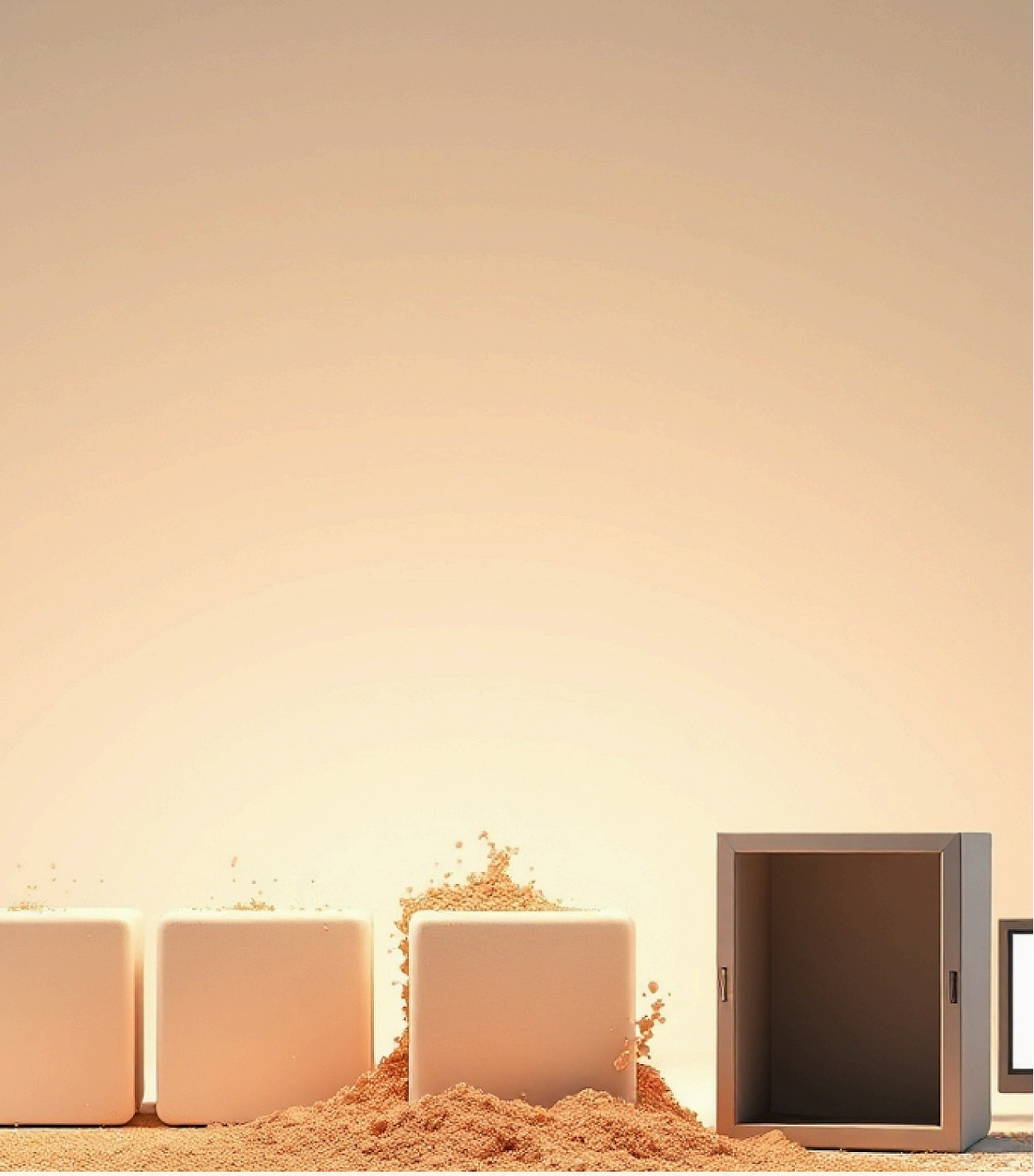
Some services offer synchronization and backup features together. For example, a cloud storage service might sync your folders across devices and also keep older versions you can restore. One service can do both jobs. When you use such a service, check which feature you are relying on for safety, because they behave differently.



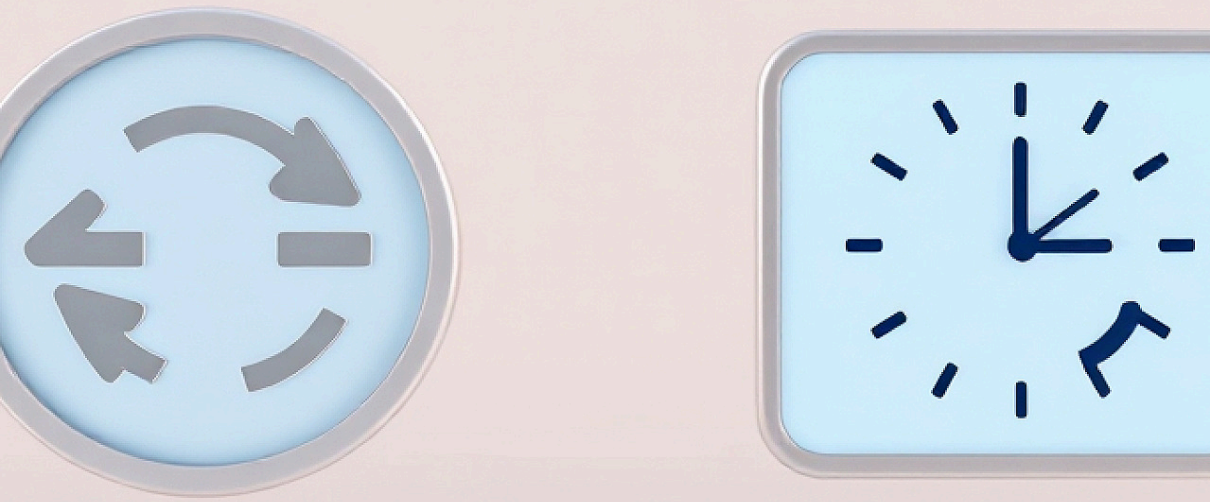
Being synchronized alone does not mean a reliable backup exists. The key warning is that the two features are not the same thing. Your files may appear on several devices through sync, yet no old separate copy is kept. If a file is changed or deleted everywhere by sync, there may be nothing to restore from.



Draw a simple picture in your mind. On one side, two synced folders point to each other with arrows, mirroring the same current files. On the other side, a saved old copy sits apart, not changing with the folders. The picture shows why they serve different needs: one keeps places matching, the other keeps something set aside.



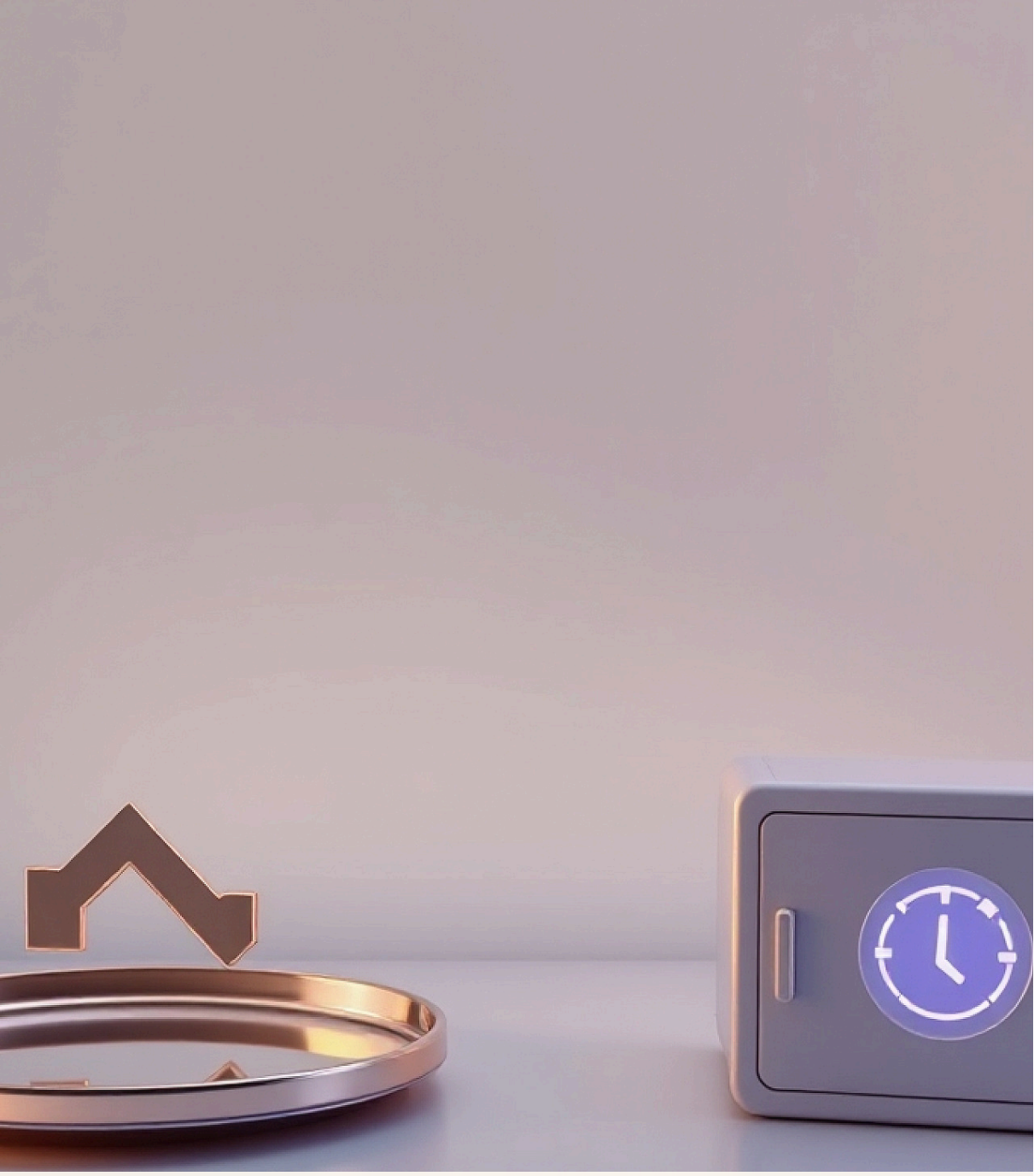
A common mistake is assuming that because files are on several devices, they are safely backed up. Synchronized copies can all change or disappear together. If you delete a file and the deletion syncs, every device loses it. Having many synced copies does not protect you from mistakes or loss; only a separate backup does.



Another common mistake is using the words backup and synchronization as if they mean the same. They describe different purposes. Saying you backed up your files when you only synced them can give false confidence. Keep the words separate in your mind: sync for consistency, backup for recovery. Clear words help you choose the right tool.



Check what you have by asking a simple question about any service: does it keep an old separate copy, or only keep places consistent? If it keeps old versions you can restore, it offers backup. If it only mirrors current files across devices, it offers synchronization. The answer tells you which feature you have and whether you can recover a mistake.



Sum up what to remember. Synchronization keeps files consistent across places and can spread deletions. Backup restores a past or separate copy when you need it, such as after a mistaken change. Remember that synced alone does not mean backed up. Use sync to keep devices matching, and use backup to keep something you can go back to.