

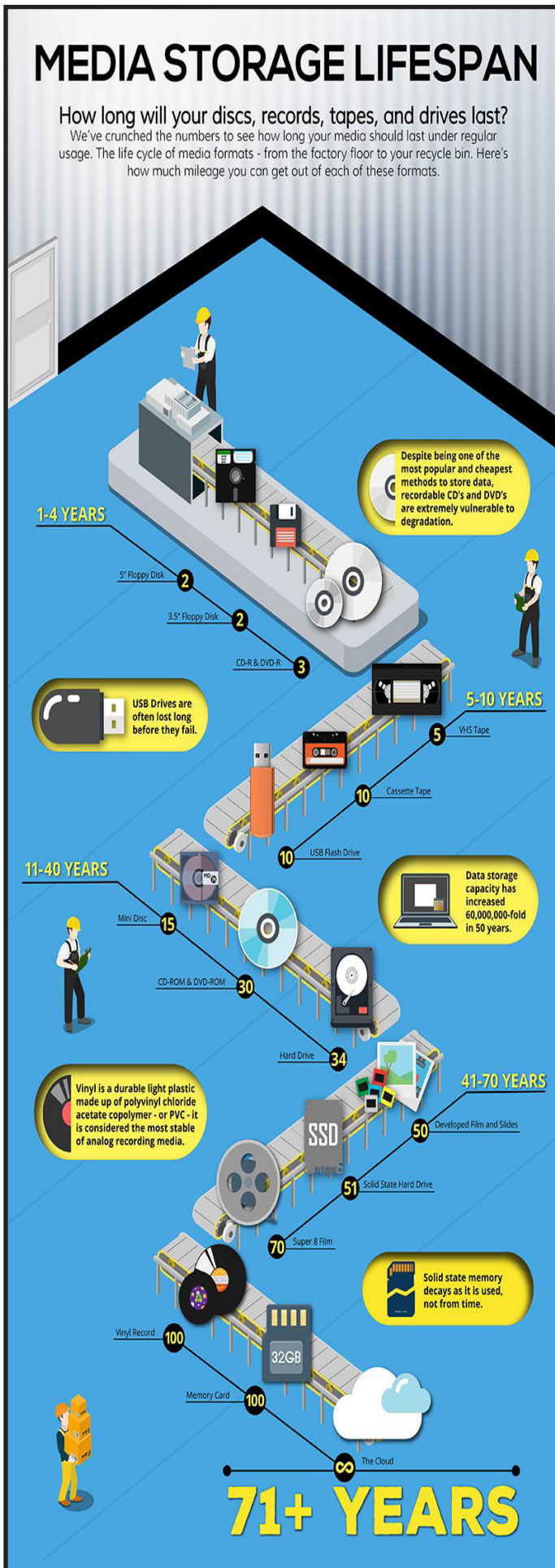
# Durability of storage media

An overview of properties, advantages and risks of storage media devices

## MEDIA STORAGE LIFESPAN

How long will your discs, records, tapes, and drives last?

We've crunched the numbers to see how long your media should last under regular usage. The life cycle of media formats - from the factory floor to your recycle bin. Here's how much mileage you can get out of each of these formats.



Backup on a regular basis!

Backup each data set at least three times, on at least two types of storage media.

Store backups in different (physical) locations.

Don't bother with trivial or unfinished data.

Archive only irreplaceable data that's in its final state. If you can download it again, reinstall it, or if you are still working on it, don't bother. Let your everyday backup take care of it.

Use write-once media, or write-protect your rewritable media to mitigate the chance of accidental overwrites.

Don't use the proprietary file containers (a large file containing smaller files) that many backup programs create, or compression if you can help it.

Stay away from proprietary file formats if possible. Use PDF/A, RTF, JPG, MPEG, etc., which are likely to be readable well into the future.

Don't use encryption except for truly sensitive data. Passwords can be lost or forgotten. Remember we're talking long haul here.

Date and document the archive. Name the media as verbosely and specifically as you can.

Respect changing technology. Just because the media lasts 100 years, doesn't mean the technology used to read it will.

Informed by Gilbert, M. W. (1998). Digital media life expectancy and care. University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Information Technologies Newsletter.

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Kontakt: info@fodako.nrw