

Online Storage

OneDrive, iCloud and Google Drive

Proton Drive, Google Sync, IDrive, Dropbox, pCloud, Mega and Backblaze

What Is the 'Cloud' in Cloud Storage?

Storage

- ▶ There's a half-joke in the tech world: "There is no cloud. It's just someone else's computer." To clear up any confusion, the *cloud* part of cloud-based storage refers to storing files somewhere other than your computer's hard drive. Usually, it means the service provider's servers.
- ▶ Having data in the cloud allows you to access your files online. Your data is usually encrypted before making the journey over the internet to the provider's servers, and it remains encrypted while it lives on those servers.
- ▶ Well-designed services don't upload a brand-new copy of your files whenever you change one little thing. Instead, the file syncing service looks for *changes* to your files and uploads only them, saving your connection bandwidth.
- ▶ You can access your cloud files through an app or utility software installed on your computer. Once it's installed, it usually shows a small notification icon and creates your synced folder structure that fits into Windows Explorer or the macOS Finder. You can also get to the files via your web browser. Of course, you need an internet connection for it to work, but if you are temporarily without a connection, that's okay. The service waits until the next time you do have a connection and takes care of business then.

Benefits of Using Cloud Storage Services

- ▶ **Data Backups:** Cloud storage keeps multiple copies of your data in different locations, allowing easy restoration if lost or hacked.
- ▶ **Easily Accessible:** You can access data from any device without needing physical storage like USBs or hard drives, by logging into your cloud account.
- ▶ **Updating and Syncing Files:** Using a "Sync Client" app, you can automatically update and sync files across devices without manual transfers.
- ▶ **Remote Work:** It simplifies remote work by storing all your files online. This makes remote work convenient as progress is saved directly to the cloud.
- ▶ **Enhanced Security:** Cloud services protect data in multiple locations and offer encryption for protection against cyber threats.
- ▶ **Cost Efficiency:** Cloud storage offers flexible pricing plans, reducing the need for physical storage purchases and maintenance.

Benefits of Using Cloud Storage Services (cont.)

- ▶ **Superior Collaboration:** Enables real-time collaboration and document sharing across locations, improving teamwork efficiency and ensuring access to the latest document versions.
- ▶ **Automatic Software Updates:** Cloud providers manage server maintenance and software updates, enhancing security and performance with minimal user effort.
- ▶ **Increased Storage Space Efficiency:** Cloud storage boosts storage space efficiency, eliminating the need for manual cleanup and allowing for easy expansion.
- ▶ **File Versioning:** File versioning in cloud storage lets users recover deleted information or revert to earlier document versions, protecting work and maintaining productivity.
- ▶ **Scalability:** Allows easy adjustment of storage capacity to meet changing needs, ensuring cost-effectiveness by paying only for utilized storage.

OneDrive

- ▶ Much more than the default online storage and syncing option for Microsoft 365 and Windows, OneDrive provides a wealth of powerful features and polished apps for all major platforms.
- ▶ Like [Google Drive](#) and [iCloud](#) (which OneDrive preceded by about 5 years), OneDrive serves a lot of functions.
- ▶ If you just want access to documents or media files, it gives you simple online storage that's accessible from the web.
- ▶ If you want to replicate the same set of files on multiple PCs, it provides folder syncing.
- ▶ [Windows 11](#) users can even back up device settings, installed apps, personalization options, and more via Windows Backup.
- ▶ If you sign in to a new PC with your Microsoft account, OneDrive can add all the desktop icons from your old one, too. Finally, OneDrive syncs Microsoft 365 documents and enables live co-authoring within that [office suite](#)'s apps.
- ▶ If you have a Microsoft account, you already have access to OneDrive (along with the web versions of Excel, Outlook, [OneNote](#), PowerPoint, and Word). The same goes for if you ever signed up for a Hotmail, Live, or Outlook.com email account. You can also sign up with an email from any other provider.

OneDrive (Cont.)

- **Pros**

- ✓ Excellent interface
- ✓ Clients for Android, iOS, macOS, and Windows
- ✓ Seamless Microsoft 365 and Windows integration
- ✓ Strong online photo presentation and management
- ✓ Powerful file sharing and collaborative editing

- **Cons**

- × Many new features are available only for organizations

iCloud

- ▶ iCloud Drive is the simplest cloud storage and syncing program for iPads, iPhones, and Macs, but its Apple-centric sharing requirement limits its appeal.
- ▶ The free Apple iCloud is a must for iPhone and Mac users, since it backs up photos, documents, and settings on their devices.
- ▶ It's among the simplest and most reliable storage and syncing services we've tested. It isn't ideal for people who like to have a lot of control over storage and syncing and the web client lacks some basic tools such as search, but it is a no-brainer solution for people who don't want to futz with it.
- ▶ Apple iCloud is best for Mac, iPhone, and iPad users who don't want to think too hard about backing up and syncing their files, especially photos.
- ▶ If the free 5GB storage capacity isn't enough space, upgrade to iCloud+ (starting at \$0.99 per month for 50GB of storage).

iCloud (cont.)

- **Pros**

- ✓ Tightly integrated with Apple products
- ✓ 5GB of free storage
- ✓ Low cost
- ✓ Capable Windows client and web access

- **Cons**

- × Only lets you share files with people who have an Apple ID
- × Lacks Android and Linux apps

DropBox

- ▶ Dropbox, once a pioneer in the cloud storage and file-sharing space, is as reliable as ever, but it's not the best value.
- ▶ Dropbox is an established player in the online storage and syncing space, and it continues to offer a reliable service that includes good, if sometimes tertiary, features (such as e-signatures).
- ▶ While Dropbox doesn't offer anywhere close to the best price per TB of storage, it is a great option for people who are long-time users and don't want to switch to another service, and those who need a healthy stable of integration options.

DropBox (cont.)

- **Pros**

- ✓ Plenty of additional features
- ✓ Integrations with thousands of applications
- ✓ Fast upload speeds

- **Cons**

- × Expensive
- × Overly complex

Google Drive



