

What is Cloud Storage?



Hi! I'm Kate, and I'm here to talk about storing files in The Cloud. We'll follow along with Michelle, who wants to learn more about her storage options.



Normally, files are stored on physical hardware that you own, like a computer's built-in hard drive, a flash drive, or a CD. Cloud storage means storing files through the Internet instead of directly on your own equipment.

If you use email or share photos in Facebook, you might already be using a type of cloud storage without realizing it! The emails you send or photos you post are stored on the website, not directly on your computer.



With cloud storage, you can get to your files from any computer with an Internet connection, simply by logging in to your account. That way you can start working on one computer, save your file, and pick up where you left off at a different computer.

Storing files in the Cloud is also a good way to make a backup copy of your files, in case something happens to your computer or flash drive.

Finally, cloud storage makes sharing files with others and collaborating together as a group much easier.



Think about some of the alternatives to cloud storage.

First, you could take files from one place to another with a flash drive. But you have to carry the flash drive around with you, it's easy to lose, and sometimes you'll end up with several versions of the same file: one on your computer, and one on the flash drive. Then you have to remember which version is the most up-to-date. With cloud storage, you don't have to carry anything with you, and you're always working with the same file.



Another method is to email files to share them. Let's say Michelle emails her friend John a file. John downloads the file to his computer, makes some changes, then sends it back in a new email. Then Michelle proofreads it and sends John the final copy. They each now have several different versions of the file, which can get confusing.

With cloud storage, Michelle and John could work simultaneously on one copy of the file, without even having to download and upload it each time!



Small amounts of cloud storage space are available for free from many different services. Three of the most popular services are Dropbox, Google Drive, and SkyDrive. We'll look at these today. Each services gives you several gigabytes of free storage space, with additional space available for a charge.