

# Understanding ‘The Cloud’

[LifeInNaples](#) • March 30, 2015



You can't turn on the news, open a magazine or talk to a neighbor without the 'cloud' appearing. What is the cloud and how can it be useful to you?

Simply put, the term cloud is used to describe information that is stored not on your own personal computer but on a remote computer or server connected via the Internet. It is the next step in computers – having your files, photos, music and more backed up and available over the Internet, wherever you are whenever you need them.

From a physical point of view, the cloud is a bunch of servers, storage, networking hardware and software connected to the internet. They are usually stored in a 'server farm,' which is a group of networked servers that are housed in one location.

These are usually in clusters of buildings that can be spread over several acres. Apple Computer has started construction on a server farm in North Carolina, and the 500,000 square-foot center may be doubled in size before completion.

## **HOW CAN YOU USE CLOUD COMPUTING?**

The most important features of the cloud for the consumer are access and

convenience. When you store documents, photos or music ‘in the cloud,’ you have access to these files wherever you are, as long as you have a data connection. No longer do you need to go home to email photos that are stored on your hard drive, or burn a CD to listen to music in your car. These can all be accessed from the servers where they reside through almost any modern device. Having your files on the cloud means that you can access your data from any computer, tablet or smart phone almost anywhere.

## **CLOUD SERVICES**

The two most well-known cloud services are probably Dropbox and iCloud. Dropbox started as a file storage and sharing service, and iCloud is what keeps Apple computers and devices synced.

DROPBOX is a service that offers 2GB of storage for free, and will add 2GB to your storage for any referrals that sign up for Dropbox. You can also upgrade to paid versions for under \$10 monthly that offer 1TB of storage.

Using the Dropbox website on a computer, or the Dropbox App on a tablet or smartphone, you can easily share files via email to friends, family and others. Dropbox is a convenient way to share dozens of photos, whereas you would be unable to email a large amount of high-resolution photos without sending multiple messages with a few files attached to each.

You can easily drag a few hundred photos into your Dropbox folder, and simply click a share button to send a link to those photos. Dropbox can also easily share video and document files.

APPLE’S ICLOUD is designed to automatically and securely unite all of your content – music, photos, files, apps, calendars, contacts, bookmarks, notes and reminders. Now, if you are at lunch with a friend and they give you their new email address that you enter into your iPhone, it will automatically download to your iMac at your office, your iPad at home, and your iPod Touch in your kitchen. iCloud works with Apple devices, and with both Mac

and PC computers.

Photo Stream, part of iCloud, manages photos that you take with iPhones or iPads. If enabled, every photo you take automatically appears on your computer or other devices, by pushing the photos from your iPhone to the other devices. If you have an Apple TV, you can even share your photos from iCloud on the big screen of your HDTV. Photo Stream stores your 1,000 most recent photos from all devices for the last 30 days in iCloud. Do not think of iCloud as permanent storage for photos – if you want to keep any of these photos, make sure they are also saved on your computer or on your device.

For business owners, professionals and students, what could be better than having your documents with you all the time? Apple's iWork apps like Pages, Keynote, and Numbers all work seamlessly and are available at [icloud.com](http://icloud.com), and you can even open and edit Microsoft Office documents by logging into your [icloud.com](http://icloud.com) account.

Whether you know it or not, you are likely using some form of cloud computing already, and it is services like this that incorporate technology into our daily lives. Make sure you try to take advantage of all that technology has to offer!

Jeff Bohr

Naples Mac Help

239.595.0482 | [jeff@jeffbohr.com](mailto:jeff@jeffbohr.com)