



UNDERSTANDING THE CLOUD

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?

The cloud refers to software, files and services that run from the Internet, instead of locally on your computer. Most cloud services can be accessed through a web browser like Safari, Firefox or Google Chrome, and some companies offer dedicated mobile apps. For a lot of people, the experience of accessing files from anywhere is like pulling it down from the sky, or "the cloud."

Some examples of cloud services include Google Drive, Apple's iCloud, Netflix, Yahoo Mail, Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive. From a physical point of view, the cloud is a large group of computers (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. Apple, Amazon and Google have dedicated server farms that are measured in acres! These are usually in clusters of buildings that can be spread over several acres.

Before we had cloud storage services, we had to save all of our files to our computers, on our local hard drives. These days, we have multiple desktop computers, laptop computers, tablets and smartphones that we may need

to access our files from. The old method was to save the file to a USB flash drive and transfer it to another computer or email the file to yourself so you could open it on another machine. But today, cloud computing allows us to simply save a file on a remote server so it can be accessed from any machine that has an Internet connection.

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 or internet 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 connected device. Having your files on the cloud means that you can access your data from any computer, tablet or smart phone almost anywhere.



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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, as well as offering storage for photos, files and music. All cloud services require an account with a username and password, for security. Depending on the amount of space your files use on the cloud, paid storage upgrades are available.

By using the Dropbox website, or the Dropbox App on a computer, 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. If you are at lunch with a friend and they give you their new email address that you enter into your iPhone, within minutes it will automatically update on

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.

iCloud Photo Library, part of Apple's iCloud service, 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. iCloud Photo Sharing allows sharing large albums with others via a secure website. If you have an Apple TV, you can even share your photos from your iCloud Library on the big screen of your HDTV.

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 via the web at icloud.com, and you can even open and edit Microsoft Office documents by logging into your 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!