

What is "The Cloud"?

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I get asked this question at least once a week. The answer is pretty simple: it just means “on the internet.” That’s all it is, a fancy marketing term that means “on the internet.”

So when someone says they store their documents “in the cloud”, they mean simply that their documents are stored on the internet.

Music, Email, Documents, Backup – it doesn’t matter what it is, if it can be stored in your computer, it can be stored “in the cloud”.

Cloud backup such as Carbonite and Mozy simply upload your information from your computer to their servers via the internet. The same is true for Dropbox, OneDrive, Google Drive or iCloud.

Most cloud-based services provide software that make it easy to interact with that service. For example, Dropbox loads software on your computer that allows you to view your documents and files just like any ‘ole folder on your computer. However, anything in that folder automatically gets uploaded to Dropbox’s servers.

The next question is usually about security.

Anything stored on computers or internet has the possibility of being hacked; cloud services are no different. However the large companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Google, Dropbox and Carbonite spend millions of dollars securing their networks and using high-grade encryption. Therefore in terms of their security, it’s usually pretty secure. Information transferred to these services usually use 1024 or 2048 bit encryption that are insanely difficult to crack and someone would have to REALLY want to get your information; which frankly is usually not that valuable to others.

Myself personally, I feel the security is fine for my purposes. It’s much more likely that your computer is going to be hacked long before the cloud storage option you use gets hacked. Is it impossible? Of course not, but very unlikely.

The benefits of storing things in the cloud is that they are usually backed up multiple times in multiple places. Therefore if something happened to Microsoft’s data-center in Washington, a duplicate version of your information might be saved in North Carolina. Once it’s on the cloud, these companies with expertise in data management and backup should be doing an excellent job of ensuring the data doesn’t disappear... unless you want it to.

Most of these services allow you to also “share” your files or folders with people either by special links, or by giving them permission with a password. This is useful for online collaboration, but just because you put your stuff on the cloud, doesn’t mean the world has access to it. You have to specify that yourself.

Now that I’ve completed this article, I’m going to save it on my “OneDrive” cloud so that I can access it on my other computers with ease!

We have another article showing some of the neat features and way to use OneDrive here. In

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concept, other services like DropBox and Google Drive work the same way.



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