

# 10 Cloud Storage Options For Your Personal Files

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There are many cloud service providers, and choosing the right one for your personal and business needs can be tricky. Here's a look at what the top vendors have to offer.

A rapidly growing number of mobile employees and consumers are moving their files and folders to the cloud. You're probably one of them.

Personal cloud services are evolving each day, and today's users have a wealth of options. Tech giants such as Google and Microsoft offer increasingly complex cloud services and compete with new platforms like DropBox and Copy.

Having a wealth of options is a good thing, but it can be overwhelming for prospective customers. Each cloud provider offers plans designed to benefit businesses and individual consumers, and it can be difficult to decide which is best suited to meet your professional and personal needs.

Today's cloud providers are doing more than storing files. Platforms such as Google Drive enable users to create spreadsheets and presentations. Up-and-coming services such as Mega are planning to implement communications tools. Most providers offer competitive options for storing and backing up data.

Moving to the cloud comes with risk, and those who embrace cloud services are doing so with caution. As cloud computing continues to grow, so do industry-wide concerns about customer privacy and information security in the cloud.

With security concerns, storage demands, pricing, and other factors to juggle in the shopping process, it can be tough to know which service is best for you. Here, we dive into the specifics of 10 popular cloud services to help you decide.

## Google Drive

Anyone with a Google account can access [Google Drive](#), the search giant's multifaceted cloud platform, which offers a built-in word processor, presentation tool, and spreadsheet app, among other features. If you already have a Google account, setup is a breeze.

Users get 15 GB of free Drive storage space upfront. This sounds like plenty, until you learn the 15 GB is shared across all the Google services you use. This includes your overflowing Gmail inbox, any documents created in Drive, and pictures automatically uploaded to Google+.

The productivity tools are handy. Users can quickly save email attachments to Drive or edit documents originally created in a different program, including Microsoft Word. Google Photos is also built into the Drive platform, and Drive will back up your pictures onto its Photo tool.

Drive gives you control over which folders are synced to your various PCs and laptops, a useful feature for separating business and personal files or on-the-go editing.

On mobile devices, you can opt to make files created in Google Drive available offline. These can be edited and later synced to the cloud when you have Internet access.

For enterprise users, the business-friendly Google Drive for Work provides enhanced control, security, and collaboration capabilities. Unlimited cloud storage is available for \$10 a month per user and supports files as large as 5 TB. Businesses can access team reports and real-time user stats, manage connected devices, and adjust security settings.

Google Drive is available on the Web as a desktop app for Macs and PCs and as a mobile app for iOS and Android devices.

## Microsoft OneDrive

Microsoft's cloud storage service, [OneDrive](#), will save any kind of file (up to 10 GB in size) to the cloud so you can access documents, photos, and videos across PCs and mobile devices. Even if you pack your account with files, OneDrive organizes them by type for faster discovery.

Frequent users of Microsoft's Office suite will benefit from OneDrive's integration with productivity apps such as Word and Excel. Opening an Office app will provide access to documents recently saved to OneDrive. Office 365 subscribers can open documents and collaborate with others in real time.

OneDrive is also a handy tool for photo storage. As a mobile app, it supports automatic uploads from your smartphone so you don't have to worry about losing pictures.

Microsoft offers a few storage options for OneDrive, which provides up to 15 GB of storage for free. For more space, customers can opt to pay monthly fees of \$2, \$4, or \$7 for 100 GB, 200 GB, or 1 TB of storage, respectively. The 1 TB plan includes a subscription to Office 365. Likewise, a subscription to Office 365 includes 1 TB of online storage.

Anyone running Windows 8, Windows 8.1, or Windows 10 has built-in access to OneDrive, which is also available online or as an app for Mac, iOS, Android, Windows Phone, Xbox, and earlier versions of Windows for PCs.

## Dropbox

[Dropbox](#) saves files to your computer and automatically syncs them across devices. It's easy to use and, like many storage services, has a clean and simple design. You can upload files via mobile app on the Dropbox website. While there is no limit to the size of files uploaded, larger ones may take a while to store.

In terms of security, Dropbox lets users opt into privacy features such as sharing controls and two-step authentication. If you accidentally delete a file, you can access previously saved versions from a 30-day history.

The storage service also provides the option to automatically upload photos from your camera to cloud storage. Pictures are organized by date and available across devices via Dropbox, which you can also use to create and share photo albums.

The downside of Dropbox is you don't start with much storage. A free Basic account will get you 2 GB, which is plenty of space for documents but doesn't amount to much if you want to store photos, music, or videos. However, you can earn more storage by completing tasks such as taking a starter tutorial, recommending friends to the service, and turning on automatic camera upload.

If you need more space, Dropbox Pro provides 1 TB of storage space, remote wipe, and additional sharing controls for \$10 per month. Enterprise customers may want to consider Dropbox for Business, which costs \$15 per user. This will give you "as much storage as you need," according to the Dropbox website, in addition to file-sharing controls and priority support.

An upside to Dropbox is its support of almost any device. In addition to apps for iOS, Mac OS X, Android, Windows, and Windows Phone, the service offers clients for BlackBerry and Linux.

## CertainSafe

Strong security is a highlight in [CertainSafe](#), which aims to accommodate a business audience with encrypted storage capabilities. The HIPAA-certified platform also scales to meet personal needs.

To protect sensitive data, CertainSafe uses MicroEncryption technology, which replaces sensitive information with distinct and obscure MicroTokens. The platform can tokenize a maximum of 16 billion bits of data, meaning it can protect large message files or credit card transactions.

If you're concerned about violating compliance regulations with your enterprise data storage, or are willing to pay for a more secure personal cloud solution, CertainSafe is worth a shot. Individual packages are available for \$13 per month and include 5 GB of cloud storage, 500 shares, and file size of 100 MB to 1 GB. A multiuser plan costs \$13 per person per month for up to 25 people, and includes 200 GB of storage, 10,000 shares, and 2 GB file size. You may also select a customized solution package.

CertainSafe is available as a Web service and as an app for Mac, iOS, Linux, Android, and any version of Windows later than XP.

## **Box**

Storage seekers often confuse [Box](#) with younger competitor Dropbox. The older storage service targets a business audience, but some consumers may find it also meets their needs for uploading, organizing, and creating documents.

A basic free Box account provides 10 GB of storage but limits file size to 250 MB. This is fine if you're primarily storing documents and some photos. However, it doesn't leave much space for videos. Another downside: The free account does not enable users to restore files to a previous state.

Those looking for additional space and flexibility can upgrade to Box's Personal Pro plan. This boosts storage space to 100 GB and maximum file size to 5 GB for a monthly cost of \$10.

Box offers a range of storage options geared toward enterprise users. Smaller teams and businesses can opt for the Starter pack, which costs \$5 a month per user and provides 100 GB of storage with 2 GB maximum file size. The more popular Business pack is \$15 a month per user and includes all starter features in addition to 5 GB maximum file size, advanced security capabilities, and integration with Microsoft Office 365.

Box is available as a mobile app for iOS, Android, Windows, and BlackBerry. It's also on the Web, where users can create documents in Web-based portals such as Office or Google Docs, then edit them in Box.

## **Copy**

Another lesser-known service, [Copy](#) by Barracuda, is equally suitable for business and personal use and shares many similarities with competitors Google Drive and OneDrive.

A free starter account provides 15 GB of storage, which can be boosted to 250 GB for \$10 per month. If you like free storage, Copy gives you the option to earn additional space through a referrals program. For every person you convince to sign up for Copy, you (and the new user) get an extra 5 GB of space. A maximum of 25 GB of extra storage can be earned through referrals.

For families, friends, or other groups who want to share space, business and joint plans are also available. For \$79 per month (or \$890 per year), you can receive 1 TB of storage accessible by up to 10 users. Copy manages shared accounts differently than its competitors in that customers evenly split storage with fellow account holders.

You can share files stored on the Copy platform with fellow users or contacts outside the platform. Copy lets you set privacy restrictions so recipients can edit documents or view in read-only mode. It also provides 30-day revision history for stored files, as well as 30-day file recovery.

Enterprise-specific features include the ability to create and manage groups and separate IT-restricted business content from personal files. Managers can also easily update access privileges and cancel or reinstate credentials for employees who leave or return.

Copy customers can download a desktop client for Windows, Linux, or OS X, or access Copy via mobile app for iOS, Android, or Windows Phone. Once uploaded, files are available across all devices. Copy is also available on the Web.

## OpenDrive

This service primarily targets businesses with its cloud storage and backup, file sync, collaboration, and sharing tools.

The platform provides many of the same features as other cloud services, and consumers may also find OpenDrive's personal plans meet their storage needs. A free basic plan will get you 5 GB of storage and 100 MB maximum file size. The personal unlimited plan (\$13/month) grants unlimited storage and file size, file versioning, and encryption for up to three users.

An unlimited business plan costs \$30 per month and also offers unlimited storage and file size, versioning, encryption, user management, and custom branding. You can design a custom plan, which costs a monthly \$6 for personal accounts and \$7 for businesses. The custom plan lets you choose the amount of storage and bandwidth, as well as the number of account users.

[OpenDrive](#) is available online and as an app for Windows, iOS, Android, and Mac devices.

## SugarSync

[SugarSync](#) is one the most costly cloud platforms but also among the easiest to use. This is a file-syncing and storage service designed to provide access to files across devices. Up to five earlier versions of your files can be stored.

Intuitive nature is a key highlight of SugarSync. When you want to sync files to the cloud, the platform lets you choose existing folders and back them up to the cloud. You don't have to drag them to an existing SugarSync folder. However, there is an option called Magic Briefcase where you can store files for backup if you prefer.

The downside to SugarSync: There is no free option.

Individuals can access 100 GB, 250 GB, or 500 GB of storage for \$75, \$100, and \$250 per year, respectively. Groups of up to nine users can share an account with administrative controls, remote wipe, and phone support for \$550 per year. Custom options for more than 10 users are also available.

Not sure it's worth the cost? SugarSync gives prospective customers the option to participate in a 30-day free trial period.

The storage platform works on Mac, iOS, Android, Windows, Windows Phone, BlackBerry, and Symbian devices. It also has a plug-in for Outlook, so users can send big files via SugarSync instead of attaching them to Outlook emails.

## Mega

At less than three years old, [Mega](#) is a fairly young cloud company compared with competitors. The storage service uploads files to the cloud for access across devices, allows browser extension installation, and syncs between a user's system and the Mega platform.

Mega users get 50 GB of free storage up front with the option to upgrade to 500 GB for \$100 per year. There are also Pro packages available for up to 4 TB of storage space.

After predecessor Megaupload was shut down following indictments for copyright infringement and other charges, the company prioritized security in building Mega. Data is encrypted and decrypted as it is transferred. The company does not have access to your encryption key, so you are the only person who can access your files.

A secure collaboration tool allows users to share content with contacts and view others' updates in real time. Non-Mega users can also receive files, but you'll have to send them the encryption key for access.

Like many cloud providers, Mega is still growing. In addition to its storage services, the company plans to build communications tools, including email, chat, and voice calling. These features are predicted to launch in early 2016.

Mega is available as a mobile app for iOS, Android, Windows Phone, and BlackBerry. There is also a local client for Windows, Linux, and OS X. Browser plugins are available for Firefox and Chrome.

## ShareFile

Citrix [ShareFile](#) started out as a service for securely sharing documents but has since expanded to accommodate file storage. It adopts a hybrid storage strategy, which is useful for enterprise customers who want to balance cloud with on-premises storage.

Customers can choose from one of three models, also known as Storage Zones: secure public cloud, on-premises storage, or a balanced combination of the two. These allow IT to separate data if necessary for meeting compliance or security needs.

Like Mega, Citrix does not know customers' data encryption keys. The company cannot see or grant access to files without customers knowing and participating in the process. ShareFile users can opt out of anonymous sharing and control access to content with remote wipe, password enforcement, data retention, jailbreak detection, and encryption of files at rest.

A Team plan costs \$60 per month and comes with 1 TB of data and 10 GB maximum file size. The pricier Business plan, at \$100 per month, delivers "unlimited storage," or 1 TB per user, with the option to increase upon request. The business plan has more advanced security and user management.

Citrix also offers a personal plan for FileShare, which costs \$16 per month and comes with 100 GB of data storage and 10 GB maximum file size.



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