

CHOOSING CLOUD STORAGE

Cloud storage services such as iCloud, Google Drive and OneDrive keep a copy of your files and photos online and make them available on every device you use. Take a photo on your phone, for example, and it can appear on your computer moments later. Most services offer a small amount of space free of charge, with more available for a monthly or yearly fee.

DON'T RELY ON CLOUD STORAGE ALONE

Cloud storage keeps your devices in step, but it isn't a backup. If a photo or file is deleted or damaged on one device, the change follows it everywhere. As most of us now take our photos on our phones, we recommend adding an online backup service such as **IDrive**, which can back up your phone as well as your computer. Our [Guide to Backing Up](#) explains more.

THE MAIN SERVICES

Service	Works best with	Free space	Worth knowing
iCloud	iPhone, iPad and Mac	5GB	The only service that can back up a whole iPhone or iPad. There's a Windows app, but no Android app.
Google Drive and Google Photos	Android phones, but works on all devices	15GB, shared with Gmail	Backs up Android phones. Paid plans can be shared with up to five other people.
OneDrive	Windows computers, but works on all devices	5GB	Built into Windows. Microsoft 365 Personal includes 1TB, and Family plans share 2TB between everyone, alongside Word and Excel.
Dropbox	All devices	2GB, on up to three devices	Good for sharing large files with others, but the free plan is small.
Proton Drive	All devices	Up to 5GB	Encrypted so that only you can see your files. Fewer features, and it costs more.

More space is available on all of these services for a monthly or yearly fee. As prices change from time to time, it's worth checking each provider's website.

WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

The right choice depends mainly on the devices you own. These are our recommendations for the most common situations.

All Apple: iPhone, iPad and Mac

iCloud. It's built into every Apple device, backs up your iPhone and iPad completely and keeps your photos and files in step without any effort. A paid iCloud+ plan can be shared with up to five family members.

An iPhone with a Windows computer

iCloud for the iPhone, as it's the only service that can back it up in full, together with the free iCloud for Windows app so that your photos and files also appear on the computer. If you already pay for Microsoft 365, OneDrive is ideal for documents on the computer.

An Android phone with a Windows computer

Google. Your phone already backs up to your Google account, Google Photos looks after your pictures, and Google Drive for desktop brings your files to the computer. If you already pay for Microsoft 365, OneDrive is a good alternative for photos and documents, although the phone itself will still back up to Google.

An Android phone with a Mac

Google, for the same reasons. Google Drive for desktop also works on a Mac, whereas iCloud can't be used on an Android phone.

A household with a mix of devices

Google One or Microsoft 365 Family. Both work equally well on every device and can be shared between up to six people. Anyone with an iPhone may also need a small iCloud+ plan to back up the phone itself.

OTHER SITUATIONS

Already paying for Microsoft 365?

Make full use of OneDrive. Personal plans include 1TB, and Family plans 2TB shared between everyone, which is plenty for most households. The OneDrive app on your phone can also upload your photos automatically.

Is privacy your top priority?

Proton Drive. Your files are encrypted before they leave your device, so not even Proton can see them. It costs more, has fewer conveniences, and can't back up your phone's settings. Apple's equivalent option for iCloud, Advanced Data Protection, isn't currently available to new users in the UK.

Where does Dropbox fit?

Dropbox is excellent for sharing large files with other people, but its free plan is small and limited to three devices. We rarely recommend it as a first choice for storing family photos and documents.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Free space soon runs out, especially with photos and videos. When it does, new photos simply stop being uploaded, so it's worth checking now and then.
- Paid plans can usually be shared with family members, which often works out cheaper than separate accounts.
- Your cloud account holds a great deal of personal information, so protect it with a strong password and two-step verification.

NOT SURE WHICH TO CHOOSE?

We can look at the devices you have, recommend the right service and set it up for you, including moving your photos and files across.