



WHAT IS CLOUD STORAGE AND SHOULD I USE IT TO STORE MY PHOTOS?

Quick Guide
Written by Rhiannon D'Averc



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Storing your photographs is extremely important for any photographer. Over time, you will soon find that the large files you shoot take up a lot of space on your computer; perhaps so much that you run out of room. You'll also want to have reassurances that your work will never be lost, such as by a computer crash or a hard drive breaking.

So, how can you solve this problem? One of the options available to you is cloud storage. It's suitable both as a back-up system and a way to clear up space on your computer, which is why a lot of people like to use it. But is it right for storing your

photographs? We'll explore everything you need to know here, so that you can make an informed decision about your storage.

Here is what we will cover:

- How cloud storage works
- Advantages of cloud storage
- Disadvantages of cloud storage
- Alternatives to cloud storage



Photograph by Mat Reding


Server banks can seem like very complex places – both to look at and to understand!


HOW CLOUD STORAGE WORKS

Let's start with the basics. What is cloud storage, and how does it work?

It's quite difficult to get your head around cloud storage unless you understand how networks and data work, but the image of a cloud floating up in the sky isn't a bad one to start with. While it's an oversimplified idea, it gets the basics across. Your data is transmitted and stored on a remote storage system. While this may seem nebulous, as if there's no physical imprint of this storage, it does actually require a physical server to be maintained. You simply access the data using the internet, or the private network that you might be hooked into.

There are three main types of cloud storage: public storage, where the storage space is available to anyone who can pay to use it across the world, which is usually subscription-based; private storage, where in-house resources are used to create your very own private storage environment behind a firewall that no one else can access; and hybrid storage, which is a mix of the two.

 **Key Lesson:** Cloud storage is a type of remote storage which allows your photographic files to be stored and transmitted from a server maintained by another company, or by your in-house team if you have one.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you want to learn how to enhance your photos and create better images, grab a copy of Photzy's premium guide: [Ultimate Guide to Fundamental Editing](#).



Photograph by Ashkan Forouzani

Being able to access your photos anywhere, at any time, can be extremely useful


ADVANTAGES OF CLOUD STORAGE

Now that we know what cloud storage is, what are the advantages of using it? Let's dive in:

- You'll have universal access. So long as you are connected to the internet, you can access your photographs at any time and from any place, via a tablet, computer, smartphone, or laptop (or potentially, other kinds of smart devices in the future).
- The data is stored elsewhere. This means that, unlike with physical hard drive backups, you won't lose all of your photographs if, for example, you have a house fire or your equipment is stolen.
- It's cheap. Though you'll likely see monthly or annual subscription costs for your photograph storage, it will cost far less than it would to purchase an adequately large external hard drive and then store it at a remote facility, but gives the same results.

- It's easy. You don't need to know much about tech to access your files, and you can also easily share them with clients just by sending a link.
- It's scalable. You pay for what you use, and in some cases, you can even store a certain amount for free. If you one day need less storage, or you one day need more, your costs will decrease or increase accordingly.

There are a lot of great things that come with cloud storage. But this isn't the whole story, so be sure to read on for the other side of the coin.

 **Key Lesson:** Cloud storage gives you an easy and cheap way to store your photographic archives, and you can access them whenever and wherever you want.



Photograph by Colton Sturgeon


Having your photos leaked might give you cause for concern if you store sensitive material.

DISADVANTAGES OF CLOUD STORAGE

Now, we know it can't all be good. So, what's the catch? Here are the disadvantages to using cloud storage:

- You cede some control over your archives. If the storage facility goes down or is hacked, you won't be able to do anything about it.
- There are some security concerns. These have been highlighted in particular by celebrities having their personal photographs hacked from the iCloud and shared with everyone. A lot of work has been done to prevent this happening again, which isn't to say that hackers won't still be able to find a way around it.
- There may be performance issues. If your app isn't working or you can't get online, then you can't access your files. The same issue could arise if you get locked out of your account or forget your password. With a physical backup, this isn't a problem.
- As a long-term solution, it may not be the most practical. You will have to continue paying to store your images until such a time as you find a replacement service, and if you stop paying, your files may be deleted.

As with anything, there are upsides and downsides. It's up to you to decide whether you can accept the disadvantages in order to get access to those plus points!

 **Key Lesson:** Cloud storage may not be as secure as you would want it to be, and access may be a problem. In the long-term, it can also start to become expensive.



Photograph by Samsung Memory

Physical types of storage are an alternative to cloud storage, such as the memory card and external hard drive.


ALTERNATIVES TO CLOUD STORAGE


Now that we've taken a look at the pros and cons of cloud storage, you may be ready to go ahead and try one of the many cloud services out there (or set up your own private network). But what if you don't want to go down this route?

Some of the alternatives you could go for include external hard drives, memory cards, or optical discs. External hard drives are generally the most popular and most reliable option. While memory cards and discs may become obsolete due to changing technologies, it is less likely that the same will happen to a hard drive, and if the cable no longer works, you can always swap out the housing for something more modern when you need access.

External hard drives can become quite expensive, but the larger sizes are becoming cheaper all the time. You can opt for something rugged to travel with, or something more powerful that you can leave at home. As mentioned previously, you could also opt to take your full hard drives to a storage facility to keep them safe from any damage that might occur in your home or workplace, especially if you have a very large archive.

There are potential problems here, however. Hard drives can become corrupted or infected with a virus; they can be stolen or destroyed; and once full, they cannot be expanded.

 **Key Lesson:** If you decide not to go for cloud storage, external hard drives are the next best option; though, there are always potential downsides to any solution.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you want to learn how to enhance your photos and create better images, grab a copy of Photzy's premium guide: [Ultimate Guide to Fundamental Editing](#).



Photograph by Rhiannon D'Averc

CONCLUSION

Cloud storage can be extremely effective when done well. Remember these tips:

- The cloud transmits your photographs to a remote storage.
- It's easy to access and cheap to use, and can store a lot of files in a flexible space.
- Security and access may be a concern in some situations.
- External hard drives are a good option if you don't want to use the cloud.
- Discs or memory cards are not a great choice for your photographic storage!
- All of the options have downsides, so make the choice that suits your needs.

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) When and where can you access cloud storage?
- 2) What elements will you need in order to get access to your photographs in the cloud?
- 3) What is one of the vulnerabilities of cloud storage?
- 4) Is the cloud a physical or incorporeal system?
- 5) What's the best alternative to cloud storage?
- 6) Why should you not store your photographic archive on disc?

Assignment:

Research cloud storage solutions versus external hard drives based on your personal storage needs. If you wanted to store an archive twice the size of what you currently have, how much would the required hard drive cost? How much for ten years of cloud storage? Which is cheaper? Could you consider doing both in order to have both a physical and digital option for accessing your photographs?



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



3 Free Photography Cheat Sheets

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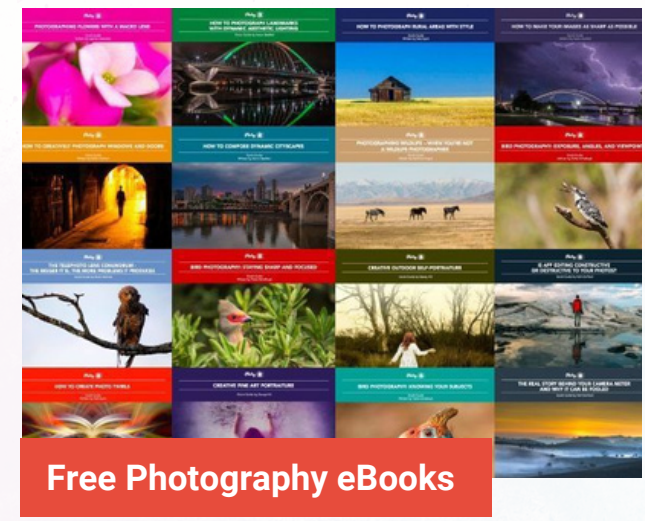
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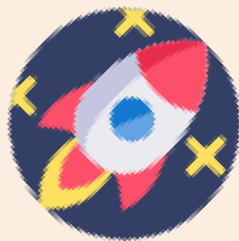
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