



You may have heard people using terms like the cloud, cloud computing, or cloud storage. But what exactly is the cloud? Simply put, the cloud is all of the things you can access remotely over the Internet. When something is in the cloud, it means it's stored on Internet servers instead of your computer's hard drive.



### Why use the cloud?

Some of the main reasons to use the cloud are convenience and reliability. For example, if you've ever used a web-based email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo! Mail, you've already used the cloud. All of the emails in a web-based service are stored on servers rather than on your computer's hard drive. This means you can access your email from any computer with an Internet connection. It also means you'll be able to recover your emails if something happens to your computer.

### Let's look at some of the most common reasons to use the cloud.

- **File storage:** You can store all types of information in the cloud, including files and email. This means you can access these things from any computer or mobile device with an Internet connection, not just your home computer. Dropbox and Google Drive are some of the most popular cloud-based storage services.
- **File sharing:** The cloud makes it easy to share files with several people at the same time. For example, you could upload several photos to a cloud-based photo service like Flickr or iCloud Photos, then quickly share them with friends and family.
- **Backing up data:** You can also use the cloud to protect your files. Apps like Mozy and Carbonite automatically back up your data to the cloud. This way, if your computer ever is lost, stolen, or damaged, you'll still be able to recover these files from the cloud.

### What is a web app?

Applications (or apps) allow you to perform tasks on your computer (or smart device). But there are also web applications-or web apps-that run in the cloud and do not need to be installed on your computer. Many of the most popular sites on the Internet are actually web apps. You may have even used a web app without realizing it! Let's take a look at some popular web apps.

- **Facebook:** Facebook lets you create an online profile and interact with your friends. Profiles and conversations can be updated at any time, so Facebook uses web app technologies to keep the information up to date.
- **Pixlr:** Pixlr is an image editing application that runs in your web browser. Much like Adobe Photoshop, it includes many advanced features, like color correction and sharpening tools.
- **Google Docs:** Google Docs is an office suite that runs in your browser. Much like Microsoft Office, you can use it to create documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and more. And because the files are stored in the cloud, it's easy to share them with others.