

# *Effectively Using the Cloud: Dropbox, Evernote and Skype and similar programs*

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## **Introduction**

Using Cloud storage programs can completely change the way you manage your data on a computer. Of course, all "Cloud" computer uses presuppose that you have an Internet connection, but using the Internet or "Cloud" to store your data either permanently or temporarily will fundamentally change the way you work on a computer. Dropbox.com, Google Drive, Microsoft SkyDrive, Apple's iCloud and many similar sites are the basis for this change. Here is an example.

I download a photo from my camera to my laptop computer and then copy the photo into my Google Drive or Dropbox folder. I can then go almost instantly to my desktop computer, open the corresponding Dropbox or Google Drive file folder and there is the copy of the photo waiting for me to use. The same photo is also available on my iPad or my iPhone.

Another example, I am at the Family History Library and find a number of documents I can use in my research. I pull out my iPhone and take a picture of the documents and then Email myself the photos. When I get home to my main computer, I put all of the photos in a Dropbox folder and invite my relatives to view the folder. I could also wait until I got home and download the photos to my computer from my iPhone.

Evernote and similar programs also change the way you do your work on the computer. Evernote is a handy way to remember anything and keep documents organized. If I want to remember a list of things to do, I can add the list to Evernote and then the list is available to me on any of my devices, iPhone, iPad, tablet computer, laptop and I can also copy an entire web page into Evernote.

Skype is a different sort of tool entirely from the online storage and note taking applications. Skype is a way to maintain two-way communication in the form of instant messages all day long. There are several other applications with similar functions such as Windows Live Messenger and Google Talk. The difference with Skype is that any number of people can participate all at the same time.

All of the programs mentioned above have a free entry level with more storage or more features for a fee.

## **Comparison of Online Storage**

Google Drive offers 5 GB of free storage with paid-for options up to 1 TB. Dropbox has 2 GB free and paid options up to 100 GB. Microsoft offers 7 GB of free capacity with its SkyDrive and Apple's iCloud offers 5 GB. I have noticed that some of the storage capacities are somewhat of an illusion. For example, Apple's iCloud can be used to synchronize email, calendars and many other functions of your iPhone, but the 5 GB of space is very easily used up. On the other hand, I have seldom used even half of the 2 GB+ of space I have in my Dropbox folder.

## Using Dropbox

Expanding on my example from above, let's say I have 50 photos using 100MB of storage space. I want to share these photos with my family. There are very few email options that will allow me to send that many large files at the same time. I could email them one by one, but that would be time consuming and impractical. I could copy them all to flash drives and send the flash drives by mail to my family members or I could use DVDs or some other physical medium. But there is a much simpler alternative. I can create a file folder in my Dropbox program and share the folder with all of my family members by sending them an email invitation. Each of them can sign up for Dropbox and the folder will appear on their individual computers and they can copy the photos out of the folder that they want to have for their own. This might take two minutes of my time and no extra expense for mailing or purchasing physical media. Dropbox will send me an email confirming when each of my relatives receive the folder with the images.

All of the programs, Google Drive, Microsoft SkyDrive, iCloud and others work exactly the same way. The main difference is that anyone receiving the documents, must have the same program as the sender. For example, I cannot use Dropbox to send documents to Google Drive.

At home, I use Dropbox constantly to move documents from one computer to another. Any documents I have in my Dropbox folder are available to my laptop, my iPhone, my iPad. In fact, they are available anywhere I can log into the Internet. The more we use Dropbox, the more uses it seems to have. We are starting to use Dropbox stored files for documents that we are working on together. There are a lot of online options for sharing documents, such as Google Docs, but Dropbox makes the process amazingly simple. However, two people cannot be working on the same document at the same time.

Most of these applications have a mobile or hand-held counterpart for both Android and Apple based systems. So you can have Dropbox on your iPhone or your Android smartphone.

## Using Evernote

[Evernote](#), is a free program, owned by Microsoft, and is an entirely different program from the online storage types such as Dropbox. Evernote is just that, a way to take notes and share them across all of your devices. The program is loaded onto your device and capture webpages and store all types of documents as attached files including photos and word processing documents.

I use Evernote constantly to remember almost everything. Any time I want to remember something, I make a note in Evernote and then it will be on my iPhone and my computer and if I need to, I can access the file from any computer or device connected to the Internet. For example, I use the program to keep track of my class attendance at the Mesa FamilySearch Library for reporting purposes. Anything I put in Evernote is automatically synchronized with all my other devices.

If you take notes at a library or other repository, you can access the notes from any other device at any time.

## Skype

[Skype](#) is an Internet communication service that provides both voice and video calls along with screen-sharing, text messaging and file-sharing capabilities all in one program. The basic services

are free but the more advanced options are fee based. Just as with the other programs discussed above, Skype is available on a variety of devices including smartphones and tablet computers. With Skype, you can talk to family members as often as you want, any time you want and for as long as you want without any extra expense except your Internet connection fees. With an inexpensive webcam, you can use the program for video conferencing.

At its most basic level, Skype is a text-messaging program that can include groups of people all at the same time. Using Skype, you can collaborate with a whole class or committee all at the same time. As long as the message box is open, you can see messages appear in real time and respond instantly. With Skype, you can have conference calls both with audio and video. You can easily share files while texting or messaging.

For a fee, you can additional services such as recording long distance interviews. To make calls, you need a computer with speakers and a microphone. If you want to do video calls, you will also need a webcam. Many laptop computers now come with a webcam built-in. You can download the Skype software for free.

You can add people to your Skype call list by sending them an email message.