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Are you “Up In The Cloud?”

You’ve likely heard the term “cloud” computing a lot lately. Whether it’s something downloaded to your iPad or something you access across several devices, cloud computing is the one of the hottest IT innovations since flash drives. Simply put, it’s on-demand offsite data storage on a large scale, accessible as if it were stored on your server—eliminating emailing large files that get stuck in email queues.

One of the largest providers of public cloud services is Box. While its customer base was built on consumer use, it’s now marketed towards businesses and enterprise IT companies. Sharing files and data is simple on any device, and accessible whenever it’s needed. Box’s free service offers 5 GB to individual users, with business pricing starting at \$15/mo. (Enterprises can contact Box for a quote.)

Dropbox is a similar service, free to individuals, with up to 2 GB of storage, with a pro plan (\$9.99/mo) and custom-built business plans available. Individuals can receive 500 GB of additional storage when they refer someone, and up to 18 GB of free storage total.

Amazon.com also has a cloud service, called Amazon Cloud Drive. With an app for desktops as well as Android, your photos, files and other important items are a click away. The first 5 GB are free, and you can view photos on a Kindle device. The apps work on Windows and Mac machines. With paid plans from \$10.00 a year (for 20 GB) to \$500.00 a year (for 1,000 GB), there is a cloud solution for every need. An active Amazon.com account is required to activate.

GoogleDrive’s cloud application is a bit more involved—a download is required to add documents to the cloud, and then to use them. However, the downloaded application can slow down a computer. Download the mobile app, and you can work with your files from your iPad or phone, as well as any computer that accesses it. Upgrading to 25GB is \$2.50 a month, with additional plans available.

Whether you’re sharing photos with a friend, keeping files accessible while you’re away, or sharing with co-workers across the country, cloud services are just what you need.

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