

# What is “The Cloud”?

When you send an email, use social media to text or call a friend online, store a photo or document or use countless other online facilities, these are made possible by the services using “the cloud”.

“The cloud” is a buzzword that is used to describe a group (known as a network) of computers (servers) that store information or programs that are accessed over the internet.

## OK, what is it exactly?

The first thing to understand about “the cloud” is that it is not a physical thing.

“The cloud” is a network of servers, with each of these servers having a different function. Some servers store your information while others allow you to run a program.

A good example is when you take a picture on your smartphone, it is normally stored on your phone's internal memory. However, when you upload the photos to Instagram, Facebook or iCloud you are uploading it to “the cloud”.

There is a good chance that you are already storing your documents and photos on the cloud on a daily basis without really realizing it. From Google Photos, Microsoft OneDrive to iCloud, any time you store information without using up your device’s internal memory, you're storing information on the cloud.

## The journey of a picture

Here is a simple explanation on how “the cloud” is used for an everyday task of sending a photograph to a friend on the internet:

- You take a picture with your device (e.g. iPad, Smartphone etc) you then use the tools built into your device to edit that photograph.
- Once you are happy with the result you decide to forward it to a friend using WhatsApp for example.
- You press send and the photograph leaves your device and is sent over the internet
- It then arrives at the WhatsApp “cloud” servers where it is securely stored
- From there it is securely forwarded to your friend, again using the internet and in most cases appears almost instantly.

Therefore “the cloud” as described above has received your image, stored it, and then forwarded it on for you.

## Storing documents

“The cloud” It is also commonly used when storing documents, therefore keeping them secure in the event that your device is lost, damaged or doesn’t have the capacity.

## How secure is the cloud?

The cloud is great for storing non-sensitive information, photos etc. But unsurprisingly, the idea of storing personal information somewhere "up in the cloud" makes some many people cautious.

Companies, like Google, Apple, Microsoft and Facebook respond to these concerns by automatically encrypting the information sent to and from their servers.