

Guide for seniors #6 –How to use "Cloud services"

A cloud is an extra space where you can store files, pictures and programmes you do not have the space for in your smart phone. You may even be using cloud services today without your knowledge.

WHAT IS A CLOUD?

We all know what a regular cloud is – a collection of particles, usually small water droplets, that changes shape and is seen in the sky. But cloud also has a different meaning in the modern digital age - a space where we can save things that don't fit on your computer or mobile phone.

Storing online

Cloud services, also known as cloud storage or the cloud, are digital services or storage via the internet. It can also be explained as saving your documents, pictures and programmes on a different server online instead of on your own computer.

Wherever you are

Services that exist in the cloud have different functions, but common to all of them is that you can reach your content from any computer, tablet or phone. This means you can begin working on a text at home on the computer, keep writing on the bus, and then finish writing it when you get into work.

RANGE OF USES

There are many ways to use the cloud. You can use it for your own sake or to share things with others. Here are some examples of how you can use the cloud.

- **Back up**

A very good reason to use cloud services is that you always have a backup of your pictures and documents. Anyone whose computer has crashed or who has had their phone stolen knows how sad it is to lose everything.

- **Share pictures**

The cloud can be a handy way to share pictures and videos with your family and friends. You can comment on and download each other's pictures.

- **Share documents**

You can give your friends access to your document through the cloud. Who created the document can decide to what level others are able to read, edit and handle it. The possibility of being several people working on the same document opens up for creative collaborations.

Wherever you are

If you use the cloud to store and work with your documents and pictures they will always remain no matter what happens to your computer or phone.

Sharing your location

When you travel from one point to another you can choose to share your destination and estimated time of arrival with select people. These people will then be able to follow your journey all the way to your destination.

Share calendar

Using the cloud it becomes easier to schedule meetings when it works for everyone. When you share a calendar with others you can see each other's plans and invite people to joint meetings in a smooth way.

HOW DOES THE CLOUD WORK?

In order to use the cloud it might be good to know a bit more about how it works. Here are three things it might be good keep in mind.

- **Do you have to pay?**

Many cloud services give you the opportunity to store data for free up to a certain amount. After that you can pay to expand the storage space if you want to store more. Read up on what is applicable for the cloud service you are interested in and compare it to others in order to find the best solution for you.

- **Where is it all stored?**

Despite its name, the cloud isn't actually a cloud, as all the data which is handled and stored in cloud services is always stored physically in one or several computer centres. These can be placed in one or several geographically separate places.

- **What do I need to get started?**

There are many applications and apps that make use of the cloud. In order to use these services you need to be online. You may also need to create an account in order to log in and use the cloud.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CLOUD

Saving things in the cloud has become more prevalent lately and in many ways it has replaced saving things locally on the computer hard drive. Given the advantages of the cloud that's not difficult to understand.

Here are some advantages:

Flexibility

- **Locally**
You can work in a document which is saved on your computer.
- **In the cloud**
You and others can work simultaneously in the same document from different locations.

Different devices

- **Locally**
You make a change in a document on your computer and it is saved there.
- **In the cloud**
You can reach your documents and files from your phone, computer or tablet. The changes you make to the document immediately become visible in all your devices.

Backup

- **Locally**
You need to manually save a copy of the document on a different hard drive, which can also break or be lost.
- **In the cloud**
You can save things automatically and become independent of physical hard drives which can break or be lost.

Hard drive space

- **Locally**
You have bought a hard drive and are locked to the amount of storage space it has.
- **In the cloud**
You store files in the cloud and can easily expand the space to the size you need.

Security

- **Locally**
If you lose a device on which you have saved files you will also lose those files.

- **In the cloud**

If you lose devices on which you have saved files, you can recreate them from a new device.

Integrity

- **Locally**

When you save a document, for example, locally on your computer it is entirely on your own terms.

- **In the cloud**

When you save a document, for example, in the cloud, you are influenced by the terms and conditions of the service, which you need to stay up to date on.

EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT CLOUD SERVICES

It is always good to compare cloud services before choosing one. Below you will find a short summary.

How to find the right service?

To find the cloud service that suits you and your needs best, you should compare them.

Does it work for you?

Check if it works with the operating system and devices you are using. It might also be good to check if there are support services in your language.

Price

Many services have free-to-use versions, but it might be good to see if there is a cost.

Some of the major cloud services

E-mails:

- Microsoft Exchange Online is a web based service for e-mail and calendaring from Microsoft.
- Gmail is a free web based e-mail service from Google, which is open for everyone.

Files:

- Dropbox is a cloud service where you can store and share files over the internet.
- iCloud is Apple's cloud based service and is built into all Apple devices.
- Google Drive is a cloud service used to save different types of files online.
- One Drive, Google Drive is Microsoft's service for saving different types of files online.

Documents

- Google Docs you can create, save and share text files, spreadsheets and presentations online.
- In Office 365 you can create, save and share text files, spreadsheets and presentations online.