

OneDrive on Windows 10 Overview

OneDrive is a cloud storage option that comes as part of the Windows 10 operating system. It has both ease of use advantages and security disadvantages.

Unfortunately we have not found an individual document that fully documents the features of OneDrive, so this narrative is an attempt to piece together the advantages and risks of the cloud based system and how to manage it from a number of separate sources.

A) What is OneDrive and what are its capabilities?

OneDrive provides the capability to place copies of your files and folders on an internet computer, in the “cloud”, which is managed by Microsoft and sited somewhere else in the world. The files and folders will be copied from your computer to the Cloud or a copy on your local computer can be “Synced” to the cloud copy. Connection to the cloud drive requires that you are logged on to the local computer with a password that is associated with a Microsoft account. Any other computer on the internet can read, write or “sync” to these files if the user has your Microsoft account name and password.

B) What are Files Folders and Directories?

All the information and programs on your computer reside in files. The operating system, programs and data on your computer exist in several thousand files.

All of these files are not placed in one big heap but are separated out into **containers** called “Folders” or “Directories”, normally grouped by function or purpose. A bunch of folders and their file contents may also be grouped inside another folder in order to manage things. Every file and folder has a name to enable it to be identified so that it can be found and worked with.

C) What files and folders are involved with OneDrive?

Not an easy question to answer – things can be changed!

Firstly, files and folders can only be sent to the cloud OneDrive if you have a Microsoft account and are logged on to the computer with a Microsoft recognized user name (which is like an E-Mail address) and the appropriate password. Most people will have set this up when they upgraded to Windows 10. If you use a

password to log onto your computer and the page where you enter your password shows something like an E-Mail address as a username (without having to enter it), then you will automatically be connected to the cloud and your **cloud** OneDrive unless you have explicitly turned off the OneDrive system.

Secondly, when you installed Windows 10 it will have automatically created a folder called **OneDrive** inside the main “Desktop” folder on your computer. By default, if you are connected to the cloud as described in the previous paragraph, any file or folder that you put inside the OneDrive folder will be automatically copied and synced to **your** cloud OneDrive. Note that **TWO OneDrive folders are involved** – one is on your computer, the other is in Microsoft’s cloud on the internet.

The default situation appears to be that only files and folders in the OneDrive folder will be copied to your OneDrive folder in the cloud, but it appears that this can be changed to cover any other folder outside the local OneDrive folder. Also by default, any change made to any of the local files or folders identified with OneDrive will be copied to the cloud drive. This process is called “Synchronization” or “Syncing” and means that the local and cloud versions will be identical. It is possible to instruct the system not to “sync” the local and cloud contents of any folders. **It is important to note that if any folder is “unsynced” then the folder and the contained files will be ERASED from the local hard drive but will remain on the cloud drive.**

Because of the potential for loss of data when folders are “unsynced” it is probably wise to turn off the use of OneDrive unless you have a specific use for the cloud drive.

D) What space does the cloud OneDrive have available?

When Windows 10 was originally released each user was allocated 15GB for free. This space has subsequently been reduced to 5GB per user. Additional space can be purchased from Microsoft.

Please see the other links for information on how to turn off OneDrive or manage its services.