# Introduction

Google Drive is a free service from Google that allows you to store files from your computer **online** and access them anywhere using the **cloud**. Google Drive also gives you access to one of Google's most popular services, **Google Docs**.

Google Docs is a **free, web-based application** for creating **documents**, **spreadsheets**, and more. In this lesson, you'll learn more about Google Drive and Google Docs and how the cloud can help you in your everyday life.

What is Google Drive?

In the spring of 2012, Google introduced **Google Drive**, a **cloud-based** storage system that allows you to keep your documents, photos, videos, and other files **online**. Whenever you place files on Google Drive, they are stored on **internet servers** rather than your computer's hard drive. You can then access those files from any computer with an internet connection or even a mobile device, like a **tablet** or **smartphone**. Drive even allows you to **share files** with your family, friends and co-workers.

Watch this video from Google to learn more about how Google Drive works.
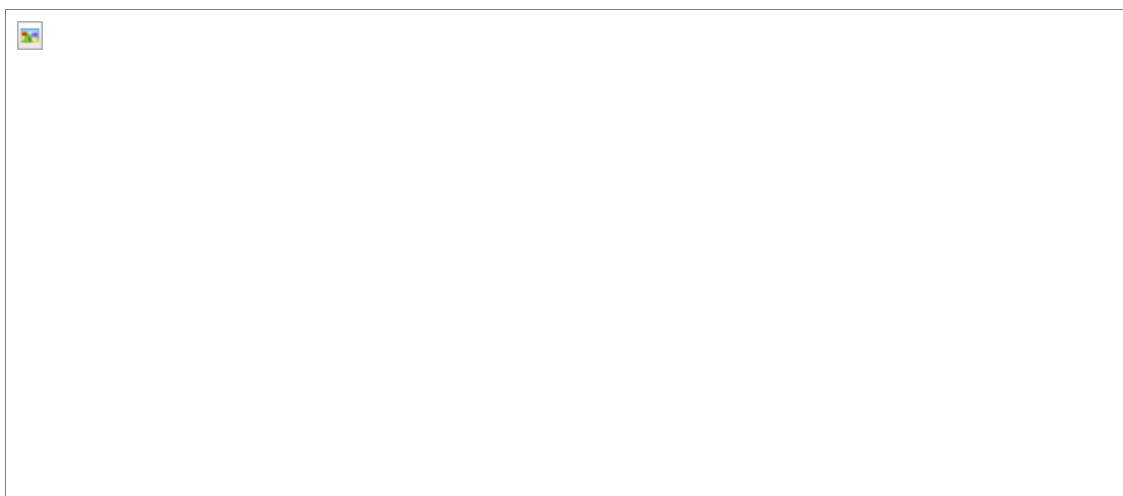
Why Use Google Drive?

Google Drive is one of the most advanced cloud storage services available today, offering **five gigabytes** (5 GB) of **free** storage space. If you've never used a cloud-based storage service like Google Drive before, take a moment to consider the **advantages** of keeping your files online. Because files can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection, Drive eliminates the need to email or save a file to a USB drive. And because Drive allows you to **share** files, **working with others** becomes easier than ever before.

Review the interactive below to learn more about what Google Drive can do for you.

The introduction of Google Drive has raised **privacy concerns** among some users. Despite what you may have heard, Google Drive keeps your files **private** and **secure**. However, storing files on the cloud is not without some risk. It's possible that your files could be **lost** by the server or **hacked** and viewed by someone else. Though the chances of this happening are **very low**, you should never keep your only copy of an important document in the cloud.

What is Google Docs?

Google Docs is a **free**, **web-based application** that lets you **create**, **share**, and **manage** documents, or **docs**. If you've ever used a productivity suite like Microsoft Office, some things about Google Docs might seem familiar. For instance, the types of docs you can work with resemble files that can be created with various Microsoft Office programs.

These are the types of docs you can create and share with Google Docs:

- **Documents:** For composing letters, flyers, essays, and other text-based files (similar to Microsoft Word documents).
- **Spreadsheets:** For storing and organizing information (similar to Microsoft Excel worksheets).
- **Presentations:** For creating and presenting slides (similar to Microsoft PowerPoint slideshows).
- **Forms:** For collecting and organizing data.
- **Drawings:** For creating simple vector graphics or diagrams.
- **Tables:** For creating visual representations of your uploaded data.

>>> Learn more about each doc type and try a live demo at the Google Docs Demo page.

Why Use Google Docs?

There are several reasons many people find Google Docs useful. You can **access it anywhere**, and it's easy to **share** and **collaborate** on docs. Google Docs lets you decide exactly who you want to see your docs by offering three sharing settings. You can choose to:

- Keep a doc **private**
- **Share** it with a few people
- Make it **public** on the web

You can also customize these settings to allow others to **edit** your doc. This can be extremely useful if you're working on a doc with a group of people. Instead of sending multiple versions of a document back and forth as you each make edits, you will all be able to make comments and edit the same file in real time.

Before Google Drive, Google Docs existed as its own service. If you are already familiar with Google Docs and would like to learn what will change by upgrading to Google Drive, check out this video from Google on Exploring Google Drive.

Challenge!

- What kinds of files would you keep on your Google Drive? Can you think of any files you'd like to **sync** across multiple devices?
- Try using one of the **demos** on the Google Docs Demo page. How does Google Docs compare with other programs you've used before?
- Think of a few situations when you might need to **collaborate** on a file with others.