How to share large files over the web

There’s no shortage of ways to share files with other people, whether you want to send them in a group chat, attach them to an email, or ping them over via AirDrop or Nearby Share. These all work perfectly well, but they’re all best for smaller files.

If you’ve got a larger file to send to someone – like a high-res video or an archive of many different files, for example – you can start to run into problems. Email clients might reject your file for being too big, or you might be waiting a while for the file to transfer over a protocol like Bluetooth.

In addition, if you’re looking to limit the amount of time a file is available for download, or if you want to limit who has access and the kind of access they have, a more feature-filled app is probably better.

You have a couple of good options, however. All the popular cloud storage services – such as Apple iCloud, Google Drive, or Microsoft OneDrive – come with flexible file sharing options built into them. However, if you don’t use one or would prefer not to use yours to share data, you’ll also find a number of dedicated apps that just do file sharing and nothing else.

Below, I look at the file sharing options offered by Apple, Google, and Microsoft, along with a couple of third-party apps. There are loads of the latter out there; I’ve just listed one of the most popular and one that I’ve used several times.

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Apple’s iCloud Drive lets you upload files into your cloud storage via **iCloud Drive on the web** by clicking the upload button at the top (the arrow pointing toward a cloud). You can also upload files using the iCloud Drive folder on macOS, **iCloud for Windows**, or the Files app for iOS.

To share a file from the web interface, click the three dots next to the file name, then choose Collaborate with Others to bring up a new dialog box.

- Click Share Options to choose who can access the file: people you’ve specifically invited or anyone who

comes across the link. You can also choose whether the people you're sharing the file with can make edits to it.

- Check the box labeled Anyone can add more people if you want to allow the file to be reshared by the people you're sharing it with.
- Select Copy Link, and if you're sharing the link with specific people, you'll need to enter their email addresses. Click Share, and iCloud Drive generates a link to the file that you can then share over email, instant message, or however you'd like.

You can't set expiration dates on links you've shared, but you can revoke access to specific people or disable links at any time: just click the three dots next to the file and Collaborate with Others. If you're on your iPhone, you can find the same sharing options by long-pressing on a file in the Files app and then

choosing Share and Collaborate from the drop-down menu.

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You have a variety of options for sharing files

if you’re a Google Drive user. From the **web interface**, you can click New > File upload to upload files up to an impressive 5TB in size. Alternatively, you can use the to sync files from your Windows or macOS computer or the Google Drive app for or to upload files from your phone.

- When a file is uploaded and ready to share, click the three dots next to it

on the web interface and then Share > Share. The next dialog box gives several options for sharing the file.

- To generate a link anyone can use, click Restricted and change it to Anyone with the link. This link can be shared on social media, in messages, or wherever you'd like.
- Once the link is created, click Viewer on the right to change the level of access: Viewer (read-

only), Commenter, or Editor. Those last two options only make a difference for files that can be edited (like Google Docs documents), not for documents that need external applications.

- Alternatively, click inside the Add people and groups box to enter specific contacts you want to share the file with via their email addresses. This requires

your contacts to log in to see the file and helps you manage access more deliberately than you can with a link. The drop-down menu on the right lets you choose between the Viewer, Commenter, and Editor access levels, and you have the option to notify your contacts that a file has been shared and leave a message if needed.

Google Drive doesn’t give

you the option of setting expiry dates on shared files, but to revoke access to them, you can go back to the same Share dialog. The same options are available in the mobile app if you tap the three dots next to a file and then Share or Manage access.

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gray-63″>*Like other apps, OneDrive lets you attach messages to file sharing invitations.*

If Microsoft is your preferred cloud storage provider (which it

might well be if you spend most of your time on Windows), you can share files via the web interface, via the OneDrive folder in Windows, via , or via OneDrive for or .

On the web, click the three dots next to a file, then Share to share it with other people. The next dialog gives you two options:

- To share the

file with specific people, enter their names into the To box, and add a message to attach to the sharing invitation if you want to.

Click Send to share the file.

- Alternatively, click Copy to create a link to your file that can be shared anywhere, from forums to social networks.

- Both options have an Anyone with the link can edit setting next to them. Click this to configure editing privileges, an expiry date for

the sharing link and, if needed, a password to access the file.

To change any of these settings after the file has been shared or to revoke access to it completely,

click the three dots next to a file, then Manage access.

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ransfer lets you share files up to 2GB in size for free.

You don’t

necessarily have to use a full cloud storage service in order to share large

files.

WeTransfer, which is available on the web, on , and on , lets you

share files up to 2GB in size for free. Pay $12 a month for a Pro account, and

that maximum goes up to 200GB; pay $23 a month for a Premium account, and

there are no file size limits.

- If the file you need to send is

less than 2GB in size, you don’t even need to sign up for an account.

Just accept the terms and conditions on the WeTransfer website,

and you’re ready to start uploading.

- Select Upload files to

pick the file or files you want to send from your computer.

- Click the three dots to pick between Send email transfer or Get

transfer link. The former handles everything via email addresses,

and you'll get confirmation when a file is downloaded; the latter

gets you a link you can share with anyone, with no confirmatio

ns.

- When everything’s ready, click Transfer or Get a link

to share the file.

You'll get a confirmation message on-screen and a

link to copy, if you've chosen that option. If you've registered

for a WeTransfer account, free or otherwise, you can keep track of how

many times the file has been downloaded by logging in to your account and

choosing Transfers from the top.

For both methods,

there are a variety of other options: some that are available

for free accounts and some that aren’t. For example, you can set custom

wallpapers for the download page (although there will be ads on

the free account). You can also set a custom expiry time (up to seven days on the

free account or unlimited on the pay accounts)
and set a password for the file

share (if you're a paying user). There's also the option to add a

message when sharing the file, regardless of whether you pay.

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gray-63″ >*Smash offers a variety*

of interesting features

on its subscription plan.

Smash is similar to WeTransf

er in that it's focused

on
quickly
sharing
large

files without any other

cloud storage features attached

. You can load up Smash on the

web and send files up to 2GB

in size without paying or even

registering.

Sign up for one

of the subscription plans,

which start at $10 per month or

$72 a year, and that goes up

to 250GB.

Signing up for a

subscrip
tion
plan
also

gets you extras such as custom

branding for your download page and

share
links
that
last

longer – 30 days instead of 14.

If you're happy with

free
file
sharing,
just

head to the website and

click the Smash logo in

the middle.

Pick

the file you want to

share from your compute

r, and choose one of two

ways to share it:

Email

or

Link.

Go for the

Email option, and you need to

enter your email address

, the email addresses of

the people you want to

share
the
file
with,

and then a subject header

and a message to be include

d in the email. Select

Link instead, and there

are two optional text fields

you can fill in if you want: a

title and a custom URL for

the download page. Your

email address is require

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and
finally
,

there's a checkbox that

means

anyone

who

wants

to download your file

will also need to provide

an email address.

For either the Email

or Link option, you can click

the cog icon at the bottom

to set a password for

the
file
share
and

customize the length of time

the file can be shared

(up to 14 days for free

accounts).

- When you're

ready,
click
either
Send

(for email) or Get a link

(for links).

You'll then

receive an email confirming the

transfer and see a link on the

screen
if
you've
chosen

to share your file in this

way. If you're a free user,

you'll
get
updates
about

when your file is download

ed over email – if you end up

paying for Smash, you can

get details by logging

in to your account, too.

https://www.theverge.com/2395872

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