

Secure your file sharing

Today's computers are capable of storing all types of files, including documents, songs, videos, and full applications. When you move one or more files from your local computer to another device or remote location, you are partaking in the activity of file sharing. In some scenarios, the recipient will have to accept the file, but typically the transfer will complete automatically.

What Are The Pros and Cons of File Sharing?

There are a number of factors to keep in mind before you start actively file sharing. Let's walk through some of the key positives and negatives about the process.

Pros

- Allows you to transfer large files over a network connection.
- Makes it easier to collaborate with other people across the globe.
- Reduces the need to maintain a central file server that is always online.

Cons

- Amount of bandwidth required can be costly.
- Hard to trace what happens to a file after it is shared publicly.
- Higher risk of acquiring a virus or other type of malware from a remote file.

Tips: Secure File Sharing for Businesses

Now let's take a look at some of the best practices when it comes to ensuring your file sharing sessions are secure at all times.

- Pick a service that offers **end-to-end encryption**. This protects you from external hackers and also prevents the host itself from viewing your data.
- Always **double-check permission settings**. Most services allow for a public sharing option, but that means that anyone with the right link can obtain your files.
- Run **audits on your files** to see who is accessing them. If a file is no longer needed, remove it from your cloud system entirely.

Types of File Sharing



Before you can start distributing files over the internet, you need to determine what method and protocol you want to use. Your decision should be based on what types of files you are moving and who will be receiving them. We'll dive into the main options and explain what scenarios they can help with the most.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP)

FTP was one of the first methods invented for moving data across networks and it remains very popular today thanks to its reliability and efficiency. FTP actions can be run through a command prompt window or a tool with a user interface. All it requires is for you to specify the source file you want to move and the destination where it should be placed.

- **Great for:** Large files, unusual file types, or legacy data.
- **Example programs:** FileZilla, Telnet, WinSCP.

Peer to Peer (P2P)

The purpose of a P2P file transfer is to remove the need for a central server that hosts the data. Instead, individual clients connect to a distributed network of peers and complete the file transfers over their own network connections. P2P might eventually be used to create an unstoppable TOR. Whether or not The Onion Router (TOR) is a truly P2P environment depends on many factors, but its popularity in creating a more secure online connection is unquestioned.

- **Great for:** Sharing files with a small group of people, files that are unavailable in public repositories.
- **Example programs:** Limewire, Gnutella, BearShare.

Cloud Services

With a cloud file sharing service, one user uploads their data to a central repository and then other users can download the files to their own devices. All data is hosted by a third party provider, although users can specify what types of permission levels to put on the files.

- **Great for:** Fast sharing of files, creating backups of data.
- **Example programs:** Dropbox, Box, OneDrive, iCloud.

Email Providers

Some people don't realize that email can actually function as a file transfer system. Every time you attach a document to an outgoing message, you are initiating a transfer of that data over the open internet.

- **Great for:** Small files, data that needs explanation.
- **Example programs:** Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo! Mail.

Removable Storage

When no network-based option will fulfill your needs, you can always rely on a physical drive to serve as your file transfer operation. This means you are literally copying data to a USB flash drive or external hard drive and plugging that device into the destination computer.

- **Great for:** Massive files, sensitive data.
- **Example programs:** USB thumb drives or external hard drives.

Reference: <https://www.varonis.com/blog/secure-file-sharing/>