

How does Google Photos work? How to make the most of 15GB of free storage?

Google Photos is a free and incredibly convenient platform for you to store and share photos in any format between all your devices. Changes to Google Photos force users to come up with adaptive solutions.

Before June 1, 2021, Google allowed users to save unlimited photos on Google Photos. However, from June 1, 2021 on, all photos you upload will count towards the 15GB of free space that Google gives your account. When you run out of free storage, you'll have to pay for the additional storage.

Google Phot gives you two photo upload options, "**High quality**" and "**Original quality**". In this article, we will help you understand how Google Photos works, the difference between "High Quality" and "Original", and then come up with the most efficient solution with 15GB of free storage.

How does Google Photos work?

If you don't mind the message that pops up when you install Google Photos on a new device, or don't check the app's settings, you won't know the difference between the quality options for the photos/videos you download up.

To give you a better understanding of Google Photos' "High Quality" and "Original" options and what happens when uploading large and RAW images, PhoneArena conducted a small test.

First, let's see how Google defines the two photo quality options on Google Photos:

High Quality:

This is a new option, effective June 1, 2021/20

1. All photos uploaded before June 1, 2021 will not count towards your Google account's free 15GB limit
2. All photos uploaded after 1/6/2021 count towards your Google account's free 15GB limit
3. The image will be compressed to save space. If a photo is larger than 16MP it will be downsized to 16MP
4. Videos with a resolution higher than 1080p will be reduced to 1090p. Videos with 1080p or lower resolution will be almost identical to the original

Origin:

1. 15GB free storage limit
2. All photos and videos will be stored in their original quality (photos/videos you take/record with whatever quality, size, resolution will be kept the same)
3. Recommended for photos larger than 16MP and videos over 1080p

What happens to small sized photos (under 16MP)?

Let's experiment with a 12MP photo taken by a Samsung Galaxy smartphone and using the High Quality upload mode. The photo is not resized, but see if it's overcompressed or degraded:



Original image (4032 x 3024 = 12.19 MP; 16.7 MB)



High quality photo (4032 x 3024 = 12.19 MP; 1.05 MB)

As you can see, the image is not reduced in size, but the size is drastically reduced from more than 16MB to just over 1MB. Thanks to Google's intelligent image compression algorithm, the image size has been greatly reduced

and you can enjoy this technology for free.

The original file is large because it was taken with Samsung's selective focus feature for close-ups. Google Photos can greatly reduce image size because most images are out of focus allowing Google to compress more in areas of the image with less detail.

Next, let's try to crop two photos to see how much compression Google Photos has applied.





Obviously at 100% crop you won't notice the difference between the original and the compressed image. At the 622% crop, a little difference is just starting to show. However, not many people have the time to zoom in on photos up to 600% for scrutiny.

Let's try again with this photo taken with the Galaxy S8: