

# Should I use Time Machine or iCloud Drive to back up my Mac?

With digital data becoming more and more important, no one wants to lose their valuable files and photos to a damaged hard drive or stolen device. This is why it's important to have a backup for your Mac.

There are two methods available for Apple users to back up data - iCloud Drive and Time Machine. While they may ultimately serve a similar purpose, the way both services work are significantly different.

Today TipsMake will cover which service you should use for your Mac backups, and how the two are different.

## How does iCloud Drive work for Mac?

It's important to understand how iCloud Drive and Time Machine work first to really understand the difference between these two options. Most people are familiar with "cloud" backups but have no idea how they actually work. When you sync your iPhone or Mac with iCloud, your device uploads all of your selected data to a secure server owned by Apple. Apple has numerous facilities around the world filled with such servers, providing them with more than enough bytes of data.

These servers are backed up regularly, so even if they fail, your data can still be restored from the backup. The data is secured on a specific server and can be downloaded back to your device if the need arises. You can sync and store specific files on iCloud Drive (such as documents and photos), but you can't store system files or perform a complete system backup of your Mac.

iCloud Drive also lets you offload data from your Mac to the cloud if your Mac is running low on storage. Basically, this means that all the files that you rarely use are backed up in the cloud and deleted from the system. However, the file shortcut still shows up in the same location on your Mac, and in case you need to access it again, the original file will be downloaded and opened on the system immediately. This allows you to save some precious storage space on your Mac.

## How does Time Machine work for Mac?

While iCloud takes an Internet-based approach to backing up data, Time Machine takes a more hands-on, local approach to backing up data. Time Machine is a feature available in macOS that automatically backs up files to an external hard drive every hour or so (depending on the backup duration you've set).

This means that the backup is available to you locally on an external hard drive rather than over the Internet. Time Machine also backs up system files and settings, creating a complete copy of your Mac. You can use this copy to restore your Mac later if needed.

# Compare iCloud Drive and Time Machine

Now, consider the benefits and drawbacks of using iCloud Drive or Time Machine for backups.

## iCloud Drive Benefits and Limitations

One benefit of iCloud Drive is that along with files being synced to an Internet server, they're also synced with all of your other Apple devices. This means you can access them from anywhere. As soon as you make any changes to your file (such as editing a document), the new version is automatically synced to the cloud.



You can also access file version history in iCloud Drive. This depends on the file type, but it usually allows you to view and restore previously saved versions (if you require it).

Many users prefer to use iCloud Drive over Time Machine, because they don't want the hassle of managing external hard drives all the time. Since iCloud Drive only requires an active Internet connection to back up files, management is much easier.

However, iCloud Drive also has some disadvantages. Since this is a subscription-based service, there will be a monthly fee depending on how much online storage you use. 5GB is offered for free, while upgrades are available to 50GB for \$0.99/month, 200GB for \$2.99/month, or 2TB for \$9.99/month.

Another downside is that iCloud Drive only syncs the user's files with the server. No file or system backup actions are performed. This means that if you need to restore your new Mac, you can only retrieve your files (such as documents and photos) from iCloud Drive. You won't be able to restore your entire system from the cloud.

You can also only recover files deleted in the last 30 days, which is a big drawback if you might need to recover lost data from more than a month ago.

## Advantages and disadvantages of Time Machine

Time Machine allows you to create backups of your entire system, including user and system files. This will allow you to restore your entire system from a Time Machine backup should the need arise, which is why many users recommend regularly backing up your system with Time Machine.

It's important to note that Time Machine doesn't back up every file every hour. Instead, it only backs up files that have changed in the last hour. So if you haven't done anything in the last hour, your Mac won't take long to back up. However, major system changes may take longer to back up to an external drive.

Time Machine costs nothing, other than a one-time investment in an external hard drive or SSD. Since your hard drive is local storage and doesn't rely on the Internet for access, you can keep it somewhere safe and secure. However, you also have to keep in mind that hard drives eventually fail after a few years, so you'll have to swap them out after a while. If you lose the hard drive that came with your Mac, this backup solution won't help either.

Time Machine is usually very easy to set up, but it can get a bit complicated if you plan to use network storage for backups. Time Machine backups are also not as accessible as iCloud Drive, because the data on them can only be accessed on a Mac and not on any other device.

Plus, if you're already using iCloud Drive, you'll need to download all of your offloaded data to your Mac to back it up with Time Machine.

The basic difference between iCloud Drive and Time Machine is that Time Machine is aimed at backing up the entire system, including system files and settings. In the event your Mac stops working or is stolen, you can set up a new Mac using a Time Machine backup. Everything will be exactly the same as on your previous Mac.

## **Should I use Time Machine or iCloud Drive to back up my Mac?**

The debate between using iCloud Drive or Time Machine is a long one and won't end overnight. Each backup method has its pros and cons. The article recommends using both if possible, using iCloud Drive to sync your files to the cloud, as well as making them accessible on different devices, and using Time Machine like a last resort in the event of an accident.

However, if you only want to use one of the two, the article recommends using only Time Machine. It provides a complete system backup that can be used to restore the entire system, better than just the user files backed up by iCloud Drive.

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