

Photo Facts

Introduction

One of the first decisions to make is whether to use the iCloud Photo Library or to use the Photo Stream. So, what's the difference?

Basically, My Photo Stream is for people that either don't take a lot of photos, don't need to access them across all of their devices on a regular basis, or use another cloud storage service such as Google Photos or Dropbox to keep and access their photos. It is also for people that refuse to upgrade from the free 5GB iCloud storage tier but have more than 5GB of photos.

iCloud Photo Library is for people that do take a lot of photos and want to be able to view all of their pictures and videos across their devices (including very old ones) and want to stick with the Apple ecosystem. It's for people that are willing to spend at least a dollar every month to have that access. It's for people that also take at least some videos that they want to be able to access on all of their devices. Lastly, it's for people that want to view their photos from any device with a web browser since all photos and videos are available at icloud.com.

After reading this if you still have questions – here are some answers.

Just the facts

1. Enabling the iCloud Photo Library syncs all photos and videos between devices using the same Apple ID.
2. With iCloud Photo Library enabled, all photos and videos count against your free 5GB limit.
3. When iCloud Photo Library is enabled, all photos and videos are backed up and available at iCloud.com including the original and edited versions.
4. When using the iCloud Library, you can turn on Optimize Storage on your device to save space.
5. When turning on iCloud Photo Library, all photos previously synced to your computer using iTunes will be deleted.
6. When using the Photo Stream, edits are not updated across devices.
7. You can only sync photos with iTunes if the iCloud Photo Library is disabled.
8. Before turning off My Photo Stream, copy any photos you want to your Camera Roll. These will be smaller device-optimized versions.
9. When turning off the iCloud Library, if you had the Download and Keep Originals option enabled, your photos and videos will remain on your device. If you use the option Optimize Photo Storage, the low-resolution versions will be removed from your device.
10. When you turn on iCloud Photo Library after having the Photo Stream enabled, photos that were in your Camera Roll will be moved to All Photos.
11. If you turn on the iCloud Photo Library, you can go to Moments and scroll to the bottom to see the syncing status.
12. Photos in the Recently Deleted album can be restored within 30 days.
13. When you edit a photo on one device, its updated on all devices. This is when using the iCloud Photo Library.

14. If you see a Camera Roll, your iCloud Photo Library is disabled. If you also see My Photo Stream, your Photo Stream is enabled.
15. Using my iPhone with 1,100 photos as an example, my iCloud account uses 4 GB to back up my photos but since I use the Optimize Photos setting, the photos only occupy .85 GB on my iPhone – a savings of 3 GB.
16. If you see All Photos, your iCloud Photo Library is enabled. You will not see a Photo Stream even if it is enabled.
17. If you only have one device and use the iCloud Photo Library, the My Photo Stream setting is immaterial.
18. My Photo Stream uploads your last 30 days and up to 1000 photos.
19. My Photo Stream doesn't count against your iCloud storage.
20. My Photo Stream does not upload videos or Live photos. In the case of Live photos, a normal photo will be uploaded.
21. Photos stored in My Photo Stream are smaller device-optimized versions. Typically, 12-megapixel photos are reduced to 3 megapixels.
22. My Photo Stream only uploads JPEG, TIFF and PNG files, it does not include HEIC, RAW or MP4.
23. Your Photo Stream photos are not available on your online iCloud account and not backed up.
24. Some 3rd party Apps such as Simple Transfer, Photosync and Syncios can download your Photo Stream photos from your device to your computer – but remember – these will be lower resolution photos.
25. If you turn on iCloud Photo Library and don't have enough storage, you will get a message asking if you want to Optimize Photos. When you do this, your library size is managed by your device, but the originals are stored at iCloud.com. To download the originals to your device you will need Wi-Fi.
26. When you delete a photo from the iCloud Photo Library or Photo Stream, it's deleted from all devices.
27. If you have one device using the iCloud Photo Library and My Photo Stream is also enabled, any other device with My Photo Stream enabled will get the photo also.
28. When you turn off the iCloud Photo Library, you will get a warning stating that all photos and videos will be removed from the device but will remain in the iCloud Photo Library online.
29. When using iCloud Photo Library, in addition to the All Photos album there are two other types of albums, those that you create and Smart Albums such as Live Photos, Time-Lapse, etc. To determine which are Smart Albums, tap Edit while viewing the albums. The one that has a red delete icon are not Smart albums.
30. To save storage you can use the HEIC format instead of JPGs which halves the storage requirements.
31. Photos backed with iCloud Photo Library are not duplicated in the normal iCloud backup.
32. When using My Photo Stream, you will have Smart Albums and any albums that you create plus any albums created by syncing photos from your computer using iTunes.
33. If you install Google Photos, all your photos and videos are backed up and available at Google Photos online. The photos will have lower resolution (12 MB photos will be reduced to 6 MB). This could be an alternative to the iCloud Photo Library. Even the edits from the Photos App show up in Google Photos.
34. Photos deleted from Google Photos are deleted from Apple Photos. The reverse is not true.
35. Occasionally, if the iCloud Photo Library or Photo Stream doesn't appear to have all the photos it should, disable and re-enable the feature.
36. To see the total number of photos and videos on your device go to Settings, General, About or use a method below.
 - Using iCloud Photo Stream – in the Albums view, the number under All Photos is the total of photos and videos. In the Moments view you'll see the individual totals for photos and videos.
 - Using the Photo Stream – go to the Moments view to see the totals.

37. What about photo sizes?

Method	Photo size
Sync with iTunes	Reduced
Syncios	Full size
Download from icloud.com	Full size
Photosync	Full size
Simple Transfer	Full size
My Photo Stream	Reduced

38. What about file types?

App	Upload	Download	Version
Sync with iTunes	JPG, HEIC	N/A	N/A
Syncios		JPG, HEIC, PNG	Original
iCloud.com	JPG	JPG, HEIC, PNG, TIFF, GIF	Edited or Original
PhotoSync	JPG, HEIC, Raw	JPG, HEIC, PNG	Edited or Original
Simple Transfer	JPG	JPG, HEIC, PNG	Edited Only
My Photo Stream	JPG, TIFF, PNG	JPG, TIFF, PNG	Original

39. To preserve albums when transferring photos to your computer use Photosync or Simple Transfer.