

All about File and Folder Syncing

Introduction

There are several major types of programs or services for backing up or syncing your data as follows:

1. Online backup such as Carbonite
2. Cloud syncing and storage services such as Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive
3. File syncing programs such as Allway Sync, FreeFileSync, Free Commander or GoodSync.

There are other programs and services in each of the above categories, but I found these to be among the best.

Jump to the [conclusions](#) at the end to skip the details.

Cloud Storage vs Online Backup

For a good explanation, read the information [here](#).

Online Backup

Online backup is mostly about disaster recovery. These programs are designed to continuously and automatically back up user-generated content including text documents, spreadsheets, financial documents, photos, music, etc. There is usually a subscription fee associated with these services. This fee is \$6 per month for Carbonite to back up your PC or \$9.34 per month to back up your PC plus one external hard drive.

These services fall into two major categories. The 1st one offers one device with unlimited storage and the 2nd offers unlimited devices with a limited amount of storage. You can see a review of them [here](#).

Online backup services retain your file system structure and let you restore everything back the way it was in case you need to rebuild your hard drive.

Cloud Storage Services

These services offer two main features, Syncing and Sharing. The best way to describe this type of service is by an example. Here's an example of how to use Google Drive.

- You must have a Google account. This can be an email account, but it is not necessary.

- Install Google Drive (now called Google Backup and Sync) on your PC.
- Sign in with your Google account or create a new one
- Install Google Drive on your mobile devices

Here's what happens next:

- Any file or folder that you add to your PC, mobile device on Google Drive online will be added to all locations. In other words, everything stays in sync.
- Any file or folder that is deleted in one place is automatically deleted everywhere.
- You can retrieve any file from any of these locations at any time including going to Google Drive on a stranger's PC if you remember the User ID and Password for Google Drive.
- You can also share any file or folder via an email link with anyone, even if they don't have a Google account.

You can also use Microsoft's OneDrive or Dropbox the same way. All these services offer some free storage. For example, Google offers 15 GB for free. You can visit the services online to review their pricing.

File Syncing

A file syncing program offers a convenient way to automatically synchronize your files across more than one computer or device. For example, you can sync a folder on your hard drive to a folder on an external hard drive. If you work from the files on your hard drive, you can periodically keep the external hard drive in sync by using one of these programs.

These programs vary in their approach in the following ways:

- Runs in the background and look for changes
- Runs only on demand
- Have portable versions
- Offers multiple sync options as follows:
 - Synchronization - the process of making sure that two or more locations contain the same up-to-date information. If you add, change, or delete a file from one location, the synchronization process will add, change, or delete the same file from the other location.
 - Replication or Mirroring - replicate a collection of files or folders from one location, the Source, to another location, the Target. During each

replication, only copies of files that have changed since the last time are copied, saving a considerable amount of time.

- Comparison – compares two locations in a side-by-side view and lists the differences.

Here are some of the programs listed below. You can also read reviews [here](#).

- Allway Sync see it [here](#).
- Free File Sync see it [here](#).
- SyncToy see it [here](#).
- GoodSync see it [here](#).
- ViceVersa Pro see it [here](#).
- FreeCommander see it [here](#).

Recommendations

- I like both FreeFileSync and FreeCommander because they are free and can be downloaded as a portable version.
- Allway Sync has a free portable version but limits the files that can be handled to 40,000 in a 30-day period.

Conclusions

- If you're looking for disaster recovery, you need an online backup such as Carbonite.
- If you want to edit or create a file and have it show up on all your devices, you need Cloud syncing and storage such as Google Drive.
- If you want to sync one hard drive to another, you need a file syncing program such as FreeFileSync.

My favorite is FreeFileSync ,either portable or regular version. It provides the most consistent results and is easy to understand. The support for the program is located [here](#).