

Skydrive Lets You Stream Content from Computer to iPad



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iCloud is a slick way to sync data on your devices over the Internet, but its free five gigabytes of storage fills up fast. Another option is Microsoft's Skydrive, which provides a whopping 25 GB for free and also works with iPads and iPhones, though not as elegantly.

Microsoft's [Skydrive app for iOS](#) makes it easy to view all your online files from your iPhone or iPad. (There is only an iPhone version, but it runs perfectly on the iPad, either in an iPhone-size app on your screen or blown up by hitting the “x2” button.)

In the app, you'll see a list of your folders and files — which you may be able to open, depending on the type. The Skydrive app has a built-in viewer for Microsoft Office formats, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, as well as common file types such as PDF, JPG or TXT.

It can also stream music and video, as long as they are in formats the iPad can handle, such as MP3 for music and MP4 for video. We played MP3 music files without a problem and even watched a half-hour TV series that streamed smoothly. The one limit is that files can't be larger than 100MB, so you will have to watch longer videos in a low resolution.

The Skydrive app is mainly for viewing files. There's no uploading, no downloading, no moving, or renaming — although you can delete files. The exception is photos, which can be downloaded to your Photo Stream.

You do everything else through Skydrive's Web interface from your laptop or desktop (PC or Mac). You can also create and edit Office files right in the Web interface using Microsoft's Web Apps.

Another feature the Skydrive app offers is sharing. Any file from your Skydrive account can be shared with others by sending a link via email. The link can be assigned as View Only, or View and Edit, allowing others to edit the actual document through the web apps.

Two Skydrive competitors, Dropbox and Box, have iPad apps that offer far more functions, such as uploading photos and videos and opening files in supported apps on the iPad, as well as offering desktop clients that make uploading and syncing files painless.

If you need a lot of space in the cloud and work with Office documents often, Skydrive's large free quota and compatibility with Microsoft's PC- and Web-based Office apps make it a must-have. If you own an iPad, Skydrive for iOS makes your world even better, allowing you to be mobile without losing access to your important data.

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