Pros and cons of common document storage solutions

Before you can store electronic copies of your documents, you will need to decide where you are going to store them.

When you're in an emergency, you want to make things as smooth as possible. That's why you should select a storage solution that allows you to access and share your essential documents in the easiest way for you, so you can concentrate on getting back on track.

There are a number of ways you can store your documents electronically. The best choice for you will depend on your own circumstances and needs. You may also consider using a combination of these solutions, to ensure you can access your important documents with or without an internet connection or working device.

Here is an overview of the most common document storage solutions:

Using your device

(Your phone, computer, or tablet)

Storing files on your device means saving your essential documents into the internal storage of your phone, computer, or tablet.

PROS:

- You can access your files on your device at anytime, even without the internet.

CONS:

- If your device is lost or broken, you will not be able to access your files.
- Devices may be infected with a virus, which may make your files unusable.

Using emails

Your emails can store your files if you email them as attachments to yourself. This will mean your files will be in the email program you use, for example, Gmail, Yahoo, or Outlook.

PROS:

- You can access your documents on your phone or computer so long as you can access the internet.
- Only you can access the documents, and anyone who has access to your emails.
- You can forward them onto important people easily, such as friends, family, or lawyers.

CONS:

- It may be difficult to find your specific documents amongst your other emails.
- Email inboxes have storage limits.
- You will need to remember your username and password to access them.
- It is possible for email servers to be hacked.

Using the 'cloud'

The 'cloud' is storage that can be accessed through the internet. You can see, download, and share your documents with any device that has an internet connection. There are many different cloud providers, that are usually free for small amounts of data.

PROS:

- You can access your files from any computer or phone with an internet connection.
- You can share your documents with other people you trust, so they can access the files too.
- You can store larger amounts of data than some of the other options listed.

CONS:

- If you don't have internet connection, you will not be able to access them.
- You will need to remember your username and password to access them, and potentially use your phone to help you log in if you have additional security settings enabled.
- The files may be at risk of a cyber attack.

Using a USB

A USB (Universal Serial Bus) is a portable drive that you can store files on. If you plug it into a computer, you will be able to access your documents on the device you are using, where you can then copy them to the device, or email them to someone you trust.

PROS:

- USBs are highly portable, so you can carry them with you easily.
- You don't need the internet to access them, just a working computer.
- For some people this will feel a safer option as you will hold your information physically, and it wont be in stored in an online environment.

CONS:

- USBs are typically the size of a thumb, meaning they may get lost or broken in an emergency if not kept close.
- A USB may have limited storage capacity which may make storing larger files difficult.
- You will not be able to access the files on your phone.
- The files may become 'corrupted' if it is plugged into a computer with a virus, which may make them unusable.

You may want to consider using a combination of these storage solutions so that you can access copies of your essential documents whenever and wherever you need them.

Compare storage solutions

Can I access my electronic copies if...				
Storage option:	**Device**	**USB**	**Cloud**	**Emails**
I don't have internet	✓	✓	✗	✗
My phone is lost or damaged	✗	✗	✓	✓
My computer is lost or damaged	✗	✗	✓	✓
I can't login to my accounts	✓	✓	✗	✗
I have been hacked	? If your device has been infected with a virus, your files may be unusable.	? If your USB has been corrupted, your files may be unusable.	? If your account has been hacked, your files may be unusable.	? If your account has been hacked, your files may be unusable.

Remember, no storage solution is completely risk free.

Learn about how to protect yourself and reduce the risk at our Frequently Asked Questions page: prepare.apps.justiceconnect.org.au/faq/

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Ready to get started storing electronic copies of your important documents?

Get step-by-step instructions you can follow on your own, or with support:
justiceconnect.org.au/get-eprepared

Get ePrepared is a free website from Justice Connect, created in partnership with Telstra, where you can learn how to store electronic copies of your essential documents, in case you're impacted by a disaster.

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