

Google Photos to drop free unlimited storage on images and videos. Here are your other options.

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After five years of enticing consumers with offers of free photo and video storage, albeit it with a hitch (lower resolution), Google turned its back on consumers Wednesday and says we'll all have to start paying as

of June 1st.

So what other options are out there for us? Sadly, there are few that are free. In an era when we are taking more [high-resolution photos](#) and videos than ever before, we either have to invest in multiple hard drives—which sadly, do not last—or spend monthly on expensive online [storage](#).

When factoring in how much storage you need, remember that it's not just photos and videos on your phone, but all those data-hungry apps. On my phone now, I'm looking at at least a half a gigabytes each for apps like Facebook and Gmail. Even the Alexa app, which only should be used for controlling the smart speaker, clocks in a quarter of a gig. These things add up.

Let's take a look at what's out there.

Amazon Photos

For anyone already paying \$119 yearly for Prime membership with Amazon, they get faster shipping, entertainment and free online, unlimited photo storage. The interface isn't as sleek as Google's, and the search can't be compared. For instance, I searched for photos with a "candle" in them, and several Amazon got right, as in below. But how does a photo of people walking on a pier end up as a candle? Because Amazon associated with the lights that way.

But it's sort of free (I like my Prime), so I would start getting used to it, and create albums with good, searchable names, to make it easier to find your photos. However, Amazon doesn't offer much free storage for video, but instead charges \$1.99 monthly for 100 GBs of storage (which is very little), 1 TB for \$6.99 or \$11.99 (higher than competitors) for 2 TB of storage.

Apple iCloud

There's a reason Apple's "Services" division surpassed the iPad and Mac computers to become Apple's second biggest revenue generator. Services includes anything subscription related, from Music and iCloud to all those iCloud backups. Yes, Apple offers some free storage, a paltry 5 GB, which would last most people a month or so. Apple charges \$1 monthly for 50 GBs (also very small), \$2.99 for 200 GBs or \$9.99 for 2 TBs. (Families can share the plan with the 200GB or 2 TB selection.)

What's different about iCloud is that when you pay, you don't have to delete your photos and videos from your phone. You're actually looking at the iCloud version. So if you went to iCloud.com to do a search for your photos, you couldn't search. The only option is to download. Searching is on the phone or tablet, and it's generally very good. A search for a starfish came up with just what I was looking for, and the candle search worked nicely as well.

Dropbox

The company that started the online storage biz back in 2007 has pretty straightforward rates. It's simply 2 TBs for \$9.99 monthly, or \$16.99 to have the family share it.

Microsoft

The Windows maker has an online plan called Microsoft OneDrive, but it's intertwined with sales of online access to programs like Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint, as well as 1 TB of online storage, under what it calls Microsoft 365. Rates are \$70 yearly for all of it, or \$99 yearly when shared with a family. While it may sound cheaper, by \$30, Apple, Google and Dropbox give you twice the storage (2 TB) for \$99 yearly.

Google

Here's where you want to be very careful. Google's rates sound competitive for online storage, but it's not just photos and videos here. All those Gmail emails with attachments that you forgot to delete also count, as does anything else you do on Google. (Our friends at Google tell me that my Gmail alone counts for 40 GBs of online storage. Yes, I've had the service since the day it started in 2004, and yes, I'm not good about deleting junk, but c'mon guys!) Google charges \$9.99 monthly for 2 TBs, or \$50 monthly for 10 TBs.

Searching for photos in an era where we shoot thousands and thousands of them is more important than ever, and nobody can touch Google when it comes to great search. For instance, asking Google to find pictures of grilled cheese sandwiches below found several to choose from

Flickr/SmugMug

The dedicated photo sharing sites starts at \$59.99 yearly with unlimited photo storage. SmugMug limits videos to 3 GBs in size and 20 minutes in length, while Flickr limits videos to 1GB in size, and 10 minutes in length. Flickr has a free offering, with up to 1,000 photos, while SmugMug has a free 14-day trial.

Hard drives

You can buy a traditional spinning disk 8 TB drive from companies like Western Digital, Seagate and others for around \$150, which sounds really economical and four times the storage of Google, Apple and Dropbox's yearly plans. Just know that spinning disks eventually go bad, so you may want to buy two drives for \$300, and back up your files on both.

Or look at a solid state drive (SSD) which has no spinning media, and could be a safer place to store your data. But SSD drives are way more expensive, with less capacity. A 2 TB external SSD drive costs a little over \$200.

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