



DeBug Tech Tips

Where's The Cloud?

Cloud computing is the latest and greatest in **buzz words** floating around in the tech world, but what does it really mean?

"The Cloud," in the tech world refers primarily to the internet which in one way makes sense since it is not tangible like say a book or a card file in a library.

Cloud computing is a rather general term that encompasses several applications that can run online, for example viewing your e-mail locally on your computer through a program like Outlook, but also keeping a copy of it on a server and having the ability to access it through a website on a computer anywhere in the world is considered cloud computing; or storing and sharing your photos and music on any one of the number of online storage sites available on the internet.

Of course these are micro-scale examples of cloud computing, and not really the reason for all the recent hype surrounding the concept.

The real reason is because our friends at Microsoft and Google are in the process of rolling out big projects involving all computer applications that reside out in the cloud and not in your local machine, all you need at home or at work is a computer and a super-fast and reliable internet connection.

Now what does this mean to you? Think of it this way, netbooks which are becoming very popular not only due to their size but also due to their attractive prices, may not have a large hard drive to save all of your files on it locally, but you can definitely access and modify all of them from the online storage sites if you have them saved out in the cloud.

Other examples of cloud computing include Google Docs, a very handy cloud-based application which allows you to create, edit, and store various types of documents, spreadsheets, and presentations; all of which are, ideally, compatible with computer-based programs like Microsoft Office.

Aside from the financial benefits of using cloud-based applications such as Google Docs there are other benefits as well; files can be accessed and edited out in the cloud by several different individuals, for example students working on a project together through an online college program.

By creating and editing the file solely on Google Docs, meaning the file never gets saved locally on the hard drive of a computer, even if the computer used to access the file is infected, the file itself will remain uninfected, because it resides out in the cloud.

Of course there are drawbacks, one is if you do not have an internet connection, whether your provider is down or you are experiencing local hardware failure, you are not able to access your documents, photos, etc. Other drawbacks are security and privacy. The majority of cloud applications do offer high levels of security and privacy, all of which you as the end user should be able to control, however once data is out in the cloud it is never really 100% secure.