BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

OneDrive

Backup, the little cloud icons and "storage full" warnings — and how to turn things off without losing a file

A calm, plain-English guide for every Windows PC owner

We go slowly, and we keep your files safe

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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For OneDrive on Windows 11, iPhone & Android · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your OneDrive manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Parts 1 to 3 explain what OneDrive is and what the little icons mean. Part 4 handles "storage full" warnings. Part 5 shows how to turn features off safely, and it's worth reading slowly. It's written for Windows 11 computers and the OneDrive phone app; if a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Understanding OneDrive

What this little cloud on your computer actually is, where to find it, and how much room you have. Start here, and the rest of the manual will make sense.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've ever opened your computer and wondered why your desktop suddenly says "OneDrive" at the top, why your files have little clouds next to them, or why a message keeps telling you your storage is full, you are in very good company. OneDrive is one of the most common sources of confusion on Windows computers, and none of it is your fault.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years helping people with their technology, and these days I help families here in Portage County, Ohio, feel at home with their computers and phones. I wrote this manual the way I'd explain OneDrive sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. When a new word comes up, I'll stop and explain it.

What OneDrive is, in one breath

OneDrive is Microsoft's online storage. It keeps a copy of your files on Microsoft's computers, reachable over the internet, so they are safe if your own computer breaks, and you can see them on your phone or another computer. It comes built into Windows, which is why it seems to have appeared on its own.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this manual does for you

By the end, you'll know exactly where your files live, what the little cloud and check-mark icons mean, what to do when OneDrive says it's full, and how to turn features off *without* losing anything. Most of all, you'll stop feeling like OneDrive is doing things behind your back.

The big promise: we go slowly, and we keep your files safe

OneDrive is a little different from most things in this series. Clicking around on a TV remote can't hurt anything. With OneDrive, a few choices really do move or delete files, so I'll point those out clearly with a **Heads up** box every time. If you follow the steps in order, and read those boxes, you will not lose anything. When in doubt, stop and ask. That's always the right move.

And you're never stuck alone. If you'd like a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**, and there's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What OneDrive Is (and What It Isn't)

People hear the word "cloud" and picture something floating and mysterious. It isn't. "The cloud" simply means **Microsoft's computers, in Microsoft's buildings, holding a copy of your files**. You reach them over the internet. That's all.

Three jobs OneDrive does

Job	What it means for you
Backup	It keeps a copy of chosen folders (often Desktop, Documents and Pictures) safe online, so a broken or stolen computer doesn't take your files with it.
Sync	"Sync" means "keep the same everywhere." Change a file on the computer and the online copy changes too. Sign in on a new computer or your phone, and the same files are there.
Space saving	OneDrive can leave some files online only, showing them on your computer without filling up its drive. This is called **Files On-Demand**, and Part 3 explains it.

The one idea that clears up most confusion

OneDrive is **sync**, not a separate safe-deposit box. Because the computer copy and the online copy are kept the same, a change in one place happens in the other. Save a new letter, and it's backed up. Delete a photo, and it's deleted online too. That second part surprises people, so it gets its own chapter (Chapter 11).

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Deleted by mistake? There's a safety net**
>
> OneDrive keeps deleted items in its own **recycle bin** on the website. For a personal Microsoft account, Microsoft keeps them there for 30 days. Chapter 20 shows you how to get them back.

What OneDrive is not

- **It's not a virus or spyware.** It's a normal part of Windows, made by Microsoft.
- **It's not required.** You can use your computer without it, and Part 5 shows how to turn it off safely.
- **It's not a second, separate backup.** Because it syncs, it's best paired with another copy, like an external drive. My *Backing Up Everything* manual covers that.

- **It's not the same as Outlook email**, though they share the same storage allowance on a free account (more on that in Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3

Finding OneDrive on Your Computer

OneDrive shows up in three places on a Windows 11 computer. Once you know them, it stops feeling hidden.

1. The little cloud by the clock

Look at the bottom-right corner of the screen, near the clock. This area is called the **notification area**. You should see a small **cloud** icon. If you don't, click the small **upward arrow (^)** to show hidden icons and look there.

1. Click the **cloud icon** once. A small OneDrive panel opens.
2. Read the top line. It usually says your files are up to date, or shows what's uploading.
3. To open the settings, click the **gear** (the OneDrive Help & Settings icon) at the top of the panel, then click **Settings**.
4. Click anywhere outside the panel to close it.

> **TIP**
>
> **Two colors of cloud**
>
> A **white or blue** cloud is the usual sign that OneDrive is running. If you see a cloud with a small warning symbol on it, OneDrive wants your attention. Chapter 12 explains the storage warnings, and Chapter 26 covers the other common ones.

2. OneDrive in File Explorer

File Explorer is the yellow folder icon on your taskbar, where you browse your files. On the left side you'll see **OneDrive** with a cloud icon, often followed by your name or "Personal." Click it to see everything stored in your OneDrive.

3. OneDrive on the web

You can always see your files by going to **onedrive.com** in any web browser and signing in with your Microsoft account. This is handy from a library computer, a new computer, or when you just want to check that something is really safe online. The web is also where the **recycle bin** and the **storage** details live.

STAY SAFE

Type the address yourself

When you go to OneDrive on the web, type **onedrive.com** into the address bar yourself, or use a bookmark you made. Don't sign in from a link in an email. Chapter 24 explains why.

CHAPTER 4

Your Microsoft Account & How Much Space You Have

OneDrive belongs to your **Microsoft account**. That's the email address and password you probably used when you first set up the computer. It might end in outlook.com, hotmail.com or live.com, or it might be your regular email address. Whatever it is, that account is the key to your OneDrive.

TIP

Write down which account it is

Open the OneDrive panel, click the gear, then **Settings**, and look on the **Account** tab. The email address shown there is the account your files are going to. Note it with your passwords. It's the first thing anyone helping you will need.

The free amount: 5 GB, shared with email attachments

Every free Microsoft account comes with **5 GB** (gigabytes) of cloud storage. Microsoft pools that 5 GB across your OneDrive files *and* your Outlook.com email attachments. Five gigabytes holds a lot of letters and documents, but photos and videos fill it surprisingly fast. That's why so many people see a "storage full" message within a year or two of getting a new computer.

The paid plans, in plain terms

If you need more room, Microsoft sells it as part of a **Microsoft 365** subscription. Here are Microsoft's U.S. list prices as of November 2026. Prices change, and Microsoft often shows a lower first-month or first-year offer that renews at the regular price, so check the final price before you buy.

Plan	Cloud storage	Who can use it	U.S. list price
Free Microsoft account	5 GB (shared with Outlook.com attachments)	You	Free
Microsoft 365 Basic	100 GB	You	$1.99 a month or $19.99 a year
Microsoft 365 Personal	1 TB (about 1,000 GB), plus Word, Excel and more	You	$9.99 a month or $99.99 a year

Plan	Cloud storage	Who can use it	U.S. list price
Microsoft 365 Family	See the note below: 2 TB shared for new plans	You plus up to 5 others	$12.99 a month or $129.99 a year

GOOD TO KNOW

Family plans changed in October 2026

Microsoft is moving Family and Premium plans to **shared** storage. New Family and Premium subscriptions started on or after October 8, 2026 get **2 TB shared** by everyone on the plan. If you already had a Family plan before then, nothing changes until it renews on or after May 2, 2027, and Microsoft says it will email you first. Your files stay private either way: sharing the storage doesn't let family members see each other's files.

FROM BILL

My honest advice on paying

Don't pay just because a warning pops up. First look at what's filling the space (Chapter 13). Often it's one folder of videos, or old phone photos that are already saved somewhere else. If you do need more room, Basic is the inexpensive storage-only choice. Personal or Family make sense if you'd use Word and Excel anyway. I never earn anything from the plan you choose.

Work or school accounts are different

If OneDrive on your computer is signed in with a work or school account, your employer or school controls many of these settings, and some steps in this manual may be locked. Microsoft says to ask your IT department in that case. This manual is about personal Microsoft accounts.

PART 2

Backing Up Your Folders

The "Back up your folders" prompt, what saying yes really does, and how to see and change what's being backed up.

CHAPTER 5

The "Back Up Your Folders" Prompt: Should You Say Yes?

Sooner or later, Windows or OneDrive will ask whether you'd like to back up your folders. It might appear while you're setting up a new computer, as a pop-up near the clock, or inside the Windows Backup app. It's a real Microsoft feature, not a scam, and for most people it's a good idea. But it helps to know what it does before you click.

What "back up your folders" actually does

Every Windows computer has standard folders: **Desktop**, **Documents**, **Pictures**, **Music** and **Videos**. When you turn on folder backup, OneDrive starts protecting the ones you choose. Microsoft calls this backing up your folders so they're "protected and available across all your devices." When you back up your Desktop, the items on your desktop even follow you to your other computers where you use OneDrive.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth it

If your computer dies, is stolen, or gets a virus, your letters, recipes, tax papers and family photos are still waiting for you online. Sign in on a new computer and they come right back. For irreplaceable photos, that peace of mind is hard to beat.

The two things to know before you say yes

- **It uses your cloud storage.** Everything in the folders you choose counts toward your 5 GB free allowance (or your plan's amount). A Pictures folder full of photos can fill 5 GB quickly. Look at the size first if you can.
- **Your folders now live "inside" OneDrive.** After backup is on, File Explorer shows your Desktop and Documents as part of OneDrive. That's normal, and Chapter 7 explains what it looks like so it doesn't alarm you.

A simple way to decide

Your situation	My usual suggestion
Mostly documents, a modest number of photos	Say yes. The free 5 GB may be enough; check after a week.

Your situation	My usual suggestion
Thousands of photos and videos	Say yes only if you're willing to pay for more space, or back up just Documents and Desktop and keep photos on an external drive.
Your photos already back up from your phone to iCloud or Google Photos	Back up Documents and Desktop; you may not need Pictures in OneDrive too.
You never want your files online	Say no (or "Not now"). Use an external drive for backups instead.

HEADS UP

"Not now" is always safe

If you're unsure, choose **Not now**, **Skip** or close the prompt. Nothing is moved and nothing is lost. You can turn backup on later in a minute or two, using the steps in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

Checking & Changing What's Backed Up

Here's how to see, at a glance, which of your folders OneDrive is protecting, and how to add one.

See which folders are backed up

1. Click the **OneDrive cloud** near the clock.
2. Click the **gear** (Help & Settings), then **Settings**.
3. Click the **Sync and backup** tab on the left.
4. Click **Manage backup**.
5. You'll see your folders (Desktop, Documents, Pictures, and often Music and Videos). Each has a switch. A folder that's on is being backed up. A folder that's off says **Not backed up**.

Start backing up a folder

1. In **Manage backup**, turn on the switch for any folder that says **Not backed up**.
2. Click **Save changes**.
3. Leave the computer on and connected to the internet. The first upload of a big Pictures folder can take hours. You can keep using the computer while it works.

> TIP
>
> **Watching it finish**
>
> Click the cloud icon any time to see progress. When it says your files are up to date, the first backup is done. After that, OneDrive only uploads new or changed files, which is quick.

Turning a folder's backup off

The same screen is where you *stop* backing up a folder. Don't flip a switch off yet, though. Turning backup off asks you a question about where your files should go, and the answer matters. Chapter 17 walks through it carefully, step by step.

HEADS UP

Read Chapter 17 before switching a folder off

Switching a folder off makes OneDrive ask whether to keep the files **only in OneDrive** (removing them from your computer) or **only on my PC** (removing them from OneDrive). Neither is wrong, but picking the one you didn't mean is how files seem to "disappear."

If you see an error when turning backup on

Microsoft lists a few common reasons a folder won't back up. In plain terms:

What it says	What to do
A file is open	Save and close any open documents, then try again.
A file name isn't allowed	Names can't start with a space or use these characters: \ : / * ? < > " |. Rename the file and try again.
A path is too long	Very deep folders inside folders can go over Windows' length limit. Shorten some folder names.
A file is too large	OneDrive can't sync a single file over 250 GB. That's rare at home.
Work or school computer	Your IT department may have turned this off. Ask them.

CHAPTER 7

Where Your Files Really Live Now

This is the chapter that clears up the most confusion. After folder backup is turned on, your files haven't gone anywhere strange. They're still on your computer. What changes is **where Windows shows them**.

What you'll notice

- In File Explorer, your **Desktop**, **Documents** and **Pictures** now appear inside **OneDrive** on the left side. They may also still show under "This PC" or Home. Both point to the same files.
- Your files have small **status icons** next to them: a cloud, a green check, or arrows. Chapter 9 explains each one.
- The address bar at the top of File Explorer may show a path with "OneDrive" in it. That's simply the folder's new home.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same files, new address

Think of it like moving your mail to a post office box at the same post office. The letters are the same; only the address changed. Your programs still find your Documents folder, and you save files exactly as you always have.

A second Microsoft rule worth knowing

Microsoft notes that when you **move** a file out of your OneDrive folder to somewhere else on the computer, it downloads to the new place and is **removed from your OneDrive**. In other words, moving a file out of OneDrive takes it out of the backup. Copying is different: a copy leaves the original where it was.

TIP

Copy, don't move, when you're unsure

If you want a file somewhere else, such as on a USB stick, right-click it and choose **Copy**, then paste it in the new place. The original stays safely backed up.

CHAPTER 8

Windows Backup & OneDrive

Windows 11 also has an app called **Windows Backup**. It's a friendly front door to the same OneDrive folder backup, plus a few other things like your settings and the list of apps you use. If you open it, don't be surprised to see the same folders listed.

Seeing your folders in Windows Backup

1. Click **Start** and type **Windows Backup**. Click the app when it appears.
2. Click **Folders** to expand it.
3. Turn on the switch for each folder you want backed up to OneDrive: Desktop, Documents, Pictures, Videos or Music.
4. You can also check backup status any time in **Settings** > **Accounts** > **Windows backup**.

GOOD TO KNOW

It needs a personal Microsoft account

Microsoft says Windows Backup is for personal Microsoft accounts. Work or school accounts won't work with it.

HEADS UP

Errors usually mean one of three things

If Windows Backup reports a OneDrive error, Microsoft says it's usually because you aren't signed in to OneDrive, you've run out of storage, or OneDrive itself has a problem to fix. Check the cloud icon by the clock first.

FROM BILL

OneDrive is one backup, not the only one

OneDrive is a wonderful safety net against a broken or stolen computer. But because it syncs, a mistake on the computer can sync too. For the things you'd truly hate to lose, I like a second copy on an external drive kept at home. My *Backing Up Everything* manual shows the easy way.

PART 3

Files On-Demand & the Little Icons

Why some files have clouds and others have check marks, how to keep a file on the computer for sure, and the one rule about deleting that everyone should know.

CHAPTER 9

The Little Icons, Explained

Open a OneDrive folder in File Explorer and you'll see a small symbol in the **Status** column next to each file. These tell you where the file is right now. Microsoft uses three main ones.

What you see	What it means	Opens without internet?
A **blue cloud** outline	**Online-only.** The file is safe in OneDrive but isn't stored on this computer. It takes up no space here and downloads when you open it.	No
A **green check mark** (outline)	**Locally available.** You opened it, so it downloaded. It's both online and on this computer. Windows may turn it back into online-only later to save space.	Yes
A **solid green circle with a white check**	**Always available.** You told OneDrive to always keep this file on the computer. It takes up space here and is always there, even offline.	Yes

GOOD TO KNOW

Every one of these is backed up

A cloud, an outline check and a solid check all mean a copy is safe in OneDrive. The only difference is whether there's *also* a copy on this computer. You don't have to do anything about any of them.

Other icons you might spot

Icon	Meaning
Two curved arrows	OneDrive is uploading or downloading that file right now. Give it a moment.
A people icon	You've shared the file or folder with someone.
A red circle with an X	That file couldn't sync. Chapter 26 explains what to try.

The cloud icon by the clock can warn you too

Taskbar icon	Meaning
Cloud with a yellow warning triangle	Your OneDrive storage is nearly full.
Cloud with a red circle and white minus sign	You've gone over your storage allowance. See Chapter 12.

CHAPTER 10

Free Up Space vs. Always Keep on This Device

Files On-Demand is the feature that lets OneDrive show you all your files without filling up your computer. Microsoft turns it on by default in current versions of the OneDrive app. It's helpful, but it can be confusing the first time a file won't open because you're offline.

The two choices on every file

Right-click any file or folder in OneDrive and you'll see two options near the top of the menu:

Choice	What it does
Always keep on this device	Downloads the file (or every file in a folder) and keeps it on this computer. Uses space, but it's always there, even without internet. New files added to that folder later download too.
Free up space	Removes the copy from this computer and leaves it safely in OneDrive. Frees space. The file still shows in File Explorer with a cloud icon and downloads again when you open it.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Free up space" does not delete anything

Microsoft is clear on this: changing a file to online-only doesn't delete it from your OneDrive. It just stops taking up room on this computer. You can still see it on your phone and on onedrive.com.

Keep a folder on the computer for sure

Going on a trip, or worried about a slow internet connection? Make the files you rely on always available.

1. Open **File Explorer** and click **OneDrive** on the left.
2. Find the folder you need, such as **Documents**.
3. Right-click it.
4. Click **Always keep on this device**.
5. Wait while it downloads. When the files show solid green circles with white checks, they're ready.

Make room on a crowded computer

1. In File Explorer, open **OneDrive** and find a big folder you rarely open, such as old vacation videos.
2. Right-click it.
3. Click **Free up space**.
4. The icons change to blue clouds. The files are still safe online; they simply aren't taking up room here.

The all-or-nothing setting

OneDrive's settings have a single switch for the whole OneDrive folder. Microsoft describes two buttons:

- **Free up disk space** (the default and Microsoft's recommendation): new files from the cloud stay online-only until you open them. Files you create on this computer stay on it.
- **Download all files**: everything in your OneDrive downloads to this computer. This uses the most space, and it's the closest thing to turning Files On-Demand off.

1. Click the **OneDrive cloud**, then the **gear**, then **Settings**.
2. Click the **Sync and backup** tab.
3. Expand **Advanced settings**.
4. Under **Files On-Demand**, choose the option you want.

HEADS UP

Check your free space before "Download all files"

If your OneDrive holds more than your computer's drive has room for, downloading everything can fill it up. Check first: open **Settings** > **System** > **Storage** to see how much space the computer has left, and compare it with how much you use in OneDrive (Chapter 13).

CHAPTER 11

The Big Rule: Delete Here, Delete Everywhere

If you remember one thing from this manual, make it this. Because OneDrive **syncs**, deleting a file from your OneDrive folder on the computer deletes it from OneDrive online and from your other devices too. Microsoft says so plainly about online-only files: delete one from your device and you delete it from your OneDrive on all devices and online.

HEADS UP

"I'll delete it here to save space" is the common mistake

People delete photos from the computer thinking the copy in OneDrive will stay. It won't; the delete syncs. To save space on the computer *without* losing the file, use **Free up space** (Chapter 10) instead of Delete.

The safety net: 30 days

Deleted items go to the OneDrive **recycle bin** on the website. For personal accounts, Microsoft keeps them there for up to **30 days**. If you also deleted a file that was stored on the computer, it shows up in the computer's own Recycle Bin too. Chapter 20 shows how to bring files back.

GOOD TO KNOW

Items in the recycle bin still count

Microsoft counts items in your OneDrive recycle bin toward your storage. If you're deleting to make room online, empty the recycle bin afterward, but only once you're sure you don't need what's in it.

The same rule on your phone

If you use the OneDrive app on your phone and delete a file there, that's a delete in OneDrive too. Camera upload is the one gentle exception: it copies photos *from* your phone *to* OneDrive, and deleting a photo from the phone's own camera roll afterward leaves the OneDrive copy alone. Chapter 22 covers that.

You want to...	Do this	Not this
Save space on the computer	Right-click > **Free up space**	Delete

You want to...	Do this	Not this
Keep a file but take it off OneDrive	Copy it out of OneDrive first, then delete it from OneDrive	Delete it from OneDrive alone
Get rid of a file everywhere	Delete (it waits 30 days in the recycle bin)	Worry: you can undo it for 30 days

PART 4

"Storage Is Full" Warnings

What the warning really means, what's filling the space, your honest choices, and what happens if you simply ignore it.

CHAPTER 12

When OneDrive Says It's Full

First, a deep breath. "Your OneDrive is full" does **not** mean your computer is broken, and it does not mean your files are gone. It means the **online** storage that comes with your Microsoft account has reached its limit, so OneDrive can't take in anything new.

Where you'll see it

- An **email** from Microsoft telling you your OneDrive is full or nearly full.
- The OneDrive **cloud icon** by the clock changes: a **yellow warning triangle** means nearly full; a **red circle with a white minus sign** means you've gone over.
- A message in the OneDrive panel when you click the cloud.

SCAM ALERT

Real warnings vs. fake ones

Because these warnings are real, scammers copy them. A real one shows on your own computer by the cloud icon, or in an email you can double-check by signing in at **onedrive.com** yourself. Never click a "storage full" link in an email or text to pay, and never call a phone number in one. Chapter 24 shows how to tell the difference.

Why it filled up

Microsoft lists these common reasons for a personal account:

- Your files simply grew past your allowance, often from photos and videos.
- On a shared subscription, someone you share it with used more than expected.
- A **folder someone shared with you** was added to your OneDrive and counts against your space.
- A subscription **expired or a renewal payment failed**, so your allowance dropped back.
- A **promotional bonus** ran out, such as the 100 GB Samsung offer some phone owners had. Microsoft says that one can't be renewed.

What stops working while you're over

Service	What happens
OneDrive	You can't upload, edit or sync new files, including new phone photos. Your existing files stay, but they're **read-only**: you can open, download or delete them, but not change them.

Service	What happens
Outlook.com email	You can't send or receive email if you're over your cloud storage or mailbox limit. Incoming mail bounces back to the sender.
Microsoft Teams	You can't send or receive messages with attachments.

FROM BILL

This is why I take it seriously

The email part catches people off guard. If your Outlook.com email suddenly stops arriving, a full OneDrive is one of the first things I check.

CHAPTER 13

Seeing What's Taking Up Space

Before you delete anything or pay for anything, find out what's actually filling the space. It's usually one or two things.

Check your storage online

1. Open a web browser and type **onedrive.com** into the address bar. Sign in with your Microsoft account.
2. Find your storage details. Microsoft's help page calls this **Manage your OneDrive storage**; it shows what's taking up space and lets you empty your recycle bin.
3. Your Microsoft account at **account.microsoft.com** also has a storage dashboard showing how much you're using and how much is left.
4. Look for the largest items. Videos are often the biggest by far.

What counts toward your OneDrive space

- Files you store, upload or sync, including Office documents.
- Photos from your phone's **camera roll** if camera upload is on.
- Screenshots, and the files in your backed-up **Desktop**, **Documents** and **Pictures** folders.
- Everything in your OneDrive **recycle bin**.

> TIP
>
> **The quick win: the recycle bin**
>
> Things you deleted in the last 30 days are still in the recycle bin, still taking up space. Once you're sure you don't need them, emptying it can free room in seconds.

Look for doubles

A very common pattern: the same phone photos are saved in OneDrive *and* in iCloud or Google Photos, or a whole old computer's files were copied into OneDrive twice. If you find the same big folder in two places, that's your best candidate to clean up. Check carefully that both copies really match before you delete one.

HEADS UP

Shared folders can count against you

If someone shared a folder with you and you added it to your OneDrive, Microsoft says it can push you over your limit. Removing the shared folder from *your* OneDrive doesn't delete the owner's copy.

CHAPTER 14

Your Choices: Tidy Up, Move Off, or Pay

Microsoft's advice is simple: delete files or buy more storage to get back under your limit. Here are your real options, from free to paid.

Choice 1: Tidy up (free)

- Empty the OneDrive recycle bin (Chapter 13).
- Delete true duplicates and things you don't want.
- Remove a large shared folder you no longer need.

Choice 2: Move big things to an external drive (free, if you own one)

Videos and old photo collections are great candidates for an external USB drive kept at home. Do it in this order so nothing is lost:

1. Plug in the external drive.
2. In File Explorer, open the OneDrive folder you want to move, such as an old Videos folder.
3. Right-click it and choose **Always keep on this device**. Wait until every file shows a solid green circle. This makes sure the real files are on the computer, not just cloud placeholders.
4. Right-click the folder again, choose **Copy**, then open the external drive and **Paste**.
5. Open a few files on the external drive to make sure they play or open properly.
6. Only then, delete the folder from OneDrive. It waits 30 days in the recycle bin in case you change your mind.

HEADS UP

Copy first, check, then delete

Never delete from OneDrive until you've opened the copies on the external drive. And remember, once the files are only on that drive, that drive is now your only copy. Keep it somewhere safe, and consider a second drive.

Choice 3: Pay for more room

Plan	Storage	U.S. list price (November 2026)
Microsoft 365 Basic	100 GB for you	$1.99 a month or $19.99 a year

Plan	Storage	U.S. list price (November 2026)
Microsoft 365 Personal	1 TB for you, plus the Office apps	$9.99 a month or $99.99 a year
Microsoft 365 Family	Up to 6 people; new plans get 2 TB shared	$12.99 a month or $129.99 a year

- Subscribers on Personal, Family and higher plans can add extra storage, up to a total of 10 TB, if they ever need it.
- After you buy more storage, Microsoft says it can take up to 24 hours for the new amount to show.
- Check that you're buying from Microsoft's own site or the Microsoft Store, not from a link in an email.

FROM BILL

Which would I pick?

If you only need a little more room, Basic is the least expensive. If you'd also use Word and Excel, Personal gives you far more storage plus the apps. If several family members need room, Family is often the best value. And if you'd rather not pay at all, Choices 1 and 2 usually do the trick.

Shared storage on Family plans

On new Family and Premium plans, all members draw from one 2 TB pool. Microsoft says if the group goes over, you won't lose access right away: you'll get notices, and you can keep accessing your files for up to a year while you sort it out. Each member's files stay private; you'll see others' totals, not their files.

CHAPTER 15

What Happens If You Ignore It

It's tempting to close the warning and hope it goes away. Here is what Microsoft says happens if a personal account stays over its storage limit. I'm sharing this not to frighten you, but so you can plan.

When	What Microsoft says happens
Right away	OneDrive stops taking new files (including phone photos). Existing files become read-only. Outlook.com may stop sending and receiving email.
After three months	If you're still over the limit, your OneDrive account is **frozen**.
After six months	Microsoft **might delete your OneDrive and all files in it**. Files deleted this way can't be recovered.

HEADS UP

Don't let it reach six months

If you've had a "full" warning for a while, please act on it now: tidy up, move files off, or upgrade. If you're not sure what to do, call me. Saving your files is exactly the kind of thing I'm glad to help with.

A canceled subscription can cause it

If you cancel Microsoft 365 Basic or Personal, Microsoft says your cloud storage drops back to the free 5 GB. If you had more than 5 GB stored, you'll be over the limit. Before canceling, check how much you use and move or tidy files first.

TIP

Make a note of your renewal date

Paid plans renew automatically. Microsoft's cancellation steps live at **account.microsoft.com/services/microsoft365**, where you'll see the renewal date and a **Cancel subscription** (or **Upgrade or Cancel**) option. If you cancel, you keep the benefits until the end of the period you've paid for.

PART 5

Turning Things Off Safely

How to stop backing up a folder, pause OneDrive, unlink it or uninstall it, without a single file going missing. Please read this part slowly.

CHAPTER 16

Before You Turn Anything Off: The Safety Checklist

Most stories of "OneDrive deleted my files" are really stories of files being left in the cloud, or left on the computer, when the person expected the opposite. The files usually still exist; they're just not where you're looking. This checklist prevents that.

HEADS UP

Do these four things first, every time

1. Decide where you want your files to end up: on this computer, in OneDrive online, or both. 2. Make sure the files are really on the computer (Always keep on this device) if you want them there. 3. Make a second copy of anything precious on an external drive. 4. Sign in at onedrive.com and look, so you know what's online before you change anything.

Step 1: Decide where your files should live

What you want	Where to go in this manual
Stop OneDrive for a few hours (slow internet, travel)	Pause syncing, Chapter 18
Stop backing up one folder, such as Pictures	Chapter 17
Keep everything on the computer and stop using OneDrive	Chapter 19, then unlink in Chapter 18
Keep everything online and free up the computer	Free up space, Chapter 10

Step 2: Bring the real files down to the computer

Online-only files (the blue clouds) aren't really on your computer. If you're about to stop backup or unlink, and you want to keep those files on the computer, download them first:

1. Open **File Explorer** and click **OneDrive** on the left.
2. Right-click the folder you care about (for example, Pictures) and choose **Always keep on this device**.
3. Wait. Large photo folders can take a long time to download.
4. When every file shows a **solid green circle with a white check**, the real files are on the computer.

TIP

Check the computer has room

Downloading a big OneDrive can fill a small computer drive. Look at **Settings** > **System** > **Storage** first. If there isn't room, copy those files to an external drive instead, or ask for help.

Step 3: Make a second copy

For anything you'd hate to lose, copy it to an external USB drive before you change OneDrive settings. It takes a little time, and it turns any mistake into a non-event.

Step 4: Look online

Sign in at **onedrive.com** and look at your folders. Knowing what's there before you start means you'll recognize what's where afterward.

CHAPTER 17

Stopping Backup for One Folder

Maybe your Pictures folder is too big for your free storage, or you'd rather keep photos on an external drive. You can stop backing up just that folder and keep the others protected.

The steps

1. Do the checklist in Chapter 16 first, especially **Always keep on this device** for that folder.
2. Click the **OneDrive cloud** by the clock, then the **gear**, then **Settings**.
3. Click the **Sync and backup** tab, then **Manage backup**.
4. Turn off the switch for the folder you want to stop backing up.
5. OneDrive asks you to choose. Read both options carefully (they're explained below) and pick one.
6. Confirm, and let OneDrive finish moving the files.

The two choices, in plain English

Microsoft's option	What happens	Choose it when...
Keep the files **only in OneDrive**, removing them from your computer	Your files stay safe online but leave this computer's folder. You'll find them at onedrive.com and in the OneDrive app.	You want them online and want the space back on the computer.
Keep the files **only on my PC**, removing them from OneDrive	Your files stay on this computer, in the normal folder, and are removed from OneDrive online.	You want them on the computer only, and you have another backup.

HEADS UP

"Only on my PC" means only one copy

If you pick "only on my PC," OneDrive is no longer protecting that folder. If the computer fails, those files go with it. Make sure you have a backup on an external drive first.

If you see "Some files couldn't be moved"

Microsoft says that if the folder has online-only (cloud) files, you may see: *"Some files couldn't be moved. Download them first by changing their state to Always keep on this device."* That's OneDrive protecting you. Go back to Chapter 16, Step 2, download the files, and try again.

GOOD TO KNOW

Two other messages you might see

"File is open and cannot be moved": save and close the file, then try again. **"OneNote notebooks can't be moved"**: OneNote notebooks live in the cloud and can't be moved to the computer this way. Leave them in OneDrive.

Where are my files now?

- Chose **only in OneDrive**? Sign in at **onedrive.com** and look in the folder with the same name, such as Pictures. They're there.
- Chose **only on my PC**? Open File Explorer and look in the regular folder under **Home** or **This PC**. If something seems missing, check the OneDrive folder too before you worry.

CHAPTER 18

Pausing, Unlinking, Hiding & Uninstalling

OneDrive has four "off" switches, from gentlest to most complete. Start with the gentlest one that does what you need.

1. Pause syncing (gentlest)

Pausing simply tells OneDrive to stop uploading and downloading for a while. Nothing moves. It's handy on a slow connection, on a hotel's Wi-Fi, or when OneDrive seems stuck.

1. Right-click the **OneDrive cloud** by the clock.
2. Choose to pause syncing, then pick **2**, **8** or **24 hours**.
3. The icon shows it's paused. OneDrive starts again by itself when the time is up, or you can resume sooner from the same menu.

2. Unlink this PC

Microsoft calls unlinking "the easiest solution" if you just don't want to use OneDrive on this computer. Microsoft says you won't lose files or data by unlinking, and you can always reach your files by signing in at OneDrive.com.

1. Finish the checklist in Chapter 16. If you want files on this computer, make sure they're downloaded (**Always keep on this device**).
2. Click the **OneDrive cloud** by the clock.
3. Click the **gear** (Help & Settings), then **Settings**.
4. Click the **Account** tab.
5. Click **Unlink this PC**, then **Unlink account**.

> HEADS UP
>
> **Cloud-only files leave the computer when you unlink**
>
> The warning OneDrive shows when you unlink says that locally available files will remain on this device, while online-only files will be removed. Those online-only files are still safe at onedrive.com; they just won't be on the computer anymore. That's why Chapter 16 has you download what you want first.

3. Hide OneDrive

Microsoft notes that on some versions of Windows, OneDrive is built in and can't be uninstalled, but you can hide it. After unlinking:

1. Open **File Explorer**, right-click **OneDrive** on the left, and click **Properties**.
2. On the **General** tab, next to **Attributes**, check **Hidden**. Click **OK**.
3. Click the OneDrive cloud, then the **gear**, and choose **Quit OneDrive**. The cloud leaves the area by the clock.

4. Uninstall OneDrive (most complete)

Microsoft says you won't lose files or data by uninstalling OneDrive from your computer; your online files stay at OneDrive.com.

1. Do the checklist in Chapter 16 and unlink first.
2. Click **Start**, type **Programs**, and choose **Add or remove programs**.
3. Find **Microsoft OneDrive** in the list, click it (or its **...** menu), and choose **Uninstall**.
4. If Windows asks for permission or a password, give it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Changed your mind? You can reinstall**
>
> OneDrive is a free download from Microsoft. Sign back in and your online files show up again. If you stopped backing up folders, you'll need to turn backup back on (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 19

Bringing Everything Back to the Computer Only

Some people decide they simply want their files on their own computer and nowhere else. That's a perfectly reasonable choice. Here's the careful order I use, built from Microsoft's own steps.

HEADS UP

This makes your computer the only copy

Once OneDrive is off, nothing is backing up your files unless you set up something else. Please plan an external-drive backup (Windows' File History, or a simple copy now and then) before you begin.

The safe order

1. **Check space.** Open Settings > System > Storage and make sure the computer has room for everything that's in OneDrive.
2. **Download everything.** In OneDrive settings, Sync and backup > Advanced settings, choose **Download all files** (Chapter 10). Or right-click each folder and choose **Always keep on this device**.
3. **Wait and verify.** Every file should show a solid green circle with a white check.
4. **Copy to an external drive** as a second copy of anything precious.
5. **Stop backup for each folder.** In Manage backup, turn off Desktop, Documents and Pictures one at a time, choosing **only on my PC** (Chapter 17).
6. **Check your folders.** Open Desktop, Documents and Pictures in File Explorer and make sure your files are there.
7. **Unlink** this PC (Chapter 18).
8. **Optional:** hide or uninstall OneDrive (Chapter 18).

GOOD TO KNOW

What about the copies online?

Choosing "only on my PC" removes those folders from OneDrive. Anything else you had in OneDrive that wasn't part of folder backup stays online. Sign in at onedrive.com to see what's left, and delete it there only if you're sure you have it elsewhere.

FROM BILL

This is a good one to do together

Bringing files home from OneDrive is safe when it's done in order, but it can take an afternoon on a big photo collection. If you'd like me to do it with you, remotely or at your kitchen table, call (330) 200-8042.

PART 6

Getting Files Back & Everyday Use

Bringing back something you deleted, rolling back after a disaster, saving phone photos automatically, and sharing with family.

CHAPTER 20

Getting Back a File You Deleted

Deleted something by accident? Don't panic. For a personal Microsoft account, OneDrive keeps deleted items in its recycle bin for **30 days**. Work or school accounts usually get 93 days.

Restore from the OneDrive recycle bin

1. Open a web browser and type **onedrive.com**. Sign in with your Microsoft account.
2. In the menu on the left, click **Recycle bin**.
3. Find the file or folder you want. Click the small circle next to it to select it.
4. Click **Restore**. It goes back to the folder it came from.
5. Want everything back? Personal accounts can choose **Restore all items**.

HEADS UP

Emptied the recycle bin? It's gone

Microsoft says files permanently deleted from the OneDrive recycle bin can't be restored. That's why I suggest emptying it only when you're certain.

TIP

Check the computer's Recycle Bin too

If the deleted file was stored on the computer, it may also be in the Windows **Recycle Bin** on your desktop. Double-click it, right-click the file and choose **Restore**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Personal Vault files hide in the recycle bin

Microsoft notes that files deleted from your Personal Vault only appear in the recycle bin when the vault is unlocked. Unlock it first, then look.

CHAPTER 21

Rolling Back After a Disaster (Restore Your OneDrive)

Sometimes the problem isn't one file. Maybe a whole folder was deleted, or files were scrambled by **ransomware** (a kind of virus that locks your files and demands money). If you have a Microsoft 365 subscription, OneDrive can roll your entire OneDrive back to how it was at a time within the last 30 days.

GOOD TO KNOW

Who has this

Microsoft says restoring your entire OneDrive needs a Microsoft 365 subscription. Without one, you can still restore individual files from the recycle bin (Chapter 20).

How to roll back

1. Go to **onedrive.com** and sign in.
2. At the top of the page, click **Settings** (the gear), then **Options**.
3. Click **Restore your OneDrive** on the left.
4. Pick a date from the list, or choose a custom date and time.
5. Look over the activity chart and list to see what changed after that point.
6. Click **Restore**.

GOOD TO KNOW

What a rollback does

Files and folders created after your chosen point go to the OneDrive recycle bin. If you change your mind, you can run Restore again to undo the restore. Items already permanently deleted from the recycle bin can't come back.

SCAM ALERT

Ransomware demands: don't pay, call for help

If a message says your files are locked and demands payment, don't pay and don't call any number in the message. Disconnect the computer from the internet, and get help. A rollback like this one, or a backup on an external drive, is how files come back.

FROM BILL

This is a call-me moment

If you think your computer has ransomware, call me at (330) 200-8042 before doing anything else on it. We'll make sure the computer is clean before rolling back, so the trouble doesn't come straight back.

CHAPTER 22

OneDrive on Your Phone: Saving Photos Automatically

The free OneDrive app for iPhone and Android lets you see your files anywhere, and it can quietly copy every new photo you take into OneDrive. Microsoft calls this **camera backup** (or **Camera Upload** on iPhone).

HEADS UP

Photos count toward your storage

Camera backup is the fastest way to fill a free 5 GB account. If your photos already back up to iCloud or Google Photos, you may not want OneDrive doing it too.

Turn it on: iPhone

1. Install **Microsoft OneDrive** from the App Store and sign in with your Microsoft account.
2. Tap your **account picture**, then **Settings**.
3. Tap **Camera Upload** and turn it on. Allow access to your photos when asked.
4. Optional: turn on **Upload Using Cellular Data** only if you have a generous data plan.

GOOD TO KNOW

An iPhone wrinkle

Microsoft notes OneDrive can't upload photos that iCloud has "optimized" (stored mostly in iCloud). If you use iCloud Photos with Optimize iPhone Storage, some photos may not upload. Pick one photo service to rely on.

Turn it on: Android

1. Install **Microsoft OneDrive** from the Play Store and sign in.
2. Tap your **account picture** at the top left.
3. Under "Camera backup is off," tap **Turn on**.
4. Videos aren't included unless you turn on **Include videos** in the camera backup settings.
5. To save battery, you can choose to back up only while charging.

Good to know

- Camera backup **uploads**; it doesn't sync both ways. Deleting a photo from your phone afterward leaves the OneDrive copy in place.
- Keep the app running in the background. Closing it can pause uploads.
- Camera backup works with one account at a time. If you also have a work account, pick the right one.

CHAPTER 23

Sharing a File or Folder with Family

OneDrive makes it easy to send a big file, a folder of photos or a family document without attaching it to an email. You send a **link**, and the other person clicks it to view.

Share from the website or File Explorer

1. Select the file or folder in OneDrive (on onedrive.com, or right-click it in File Explorer).
2. Click **Share**.
3. Choose whether people **Can view** or **Can edit**. For photos, **Can view** is usually best.
4. Type the person's email address and send, or choose **Copy link** to paste it into a text or email yourself.

Stop sharing or change who can edit

1. Right-click the shared file or folder, point to **OneDrive**, and choose **Manage access**.
2. Change **Can edit** to **Can view**, remove a person's access, or remove the link.

STAY SAFE

Share with care

Anyone with a sharing link may be able to open it, so don't share folders with tax papers, ID cards or passwords by link. Microsoft also notes that if you give someone **Can edit** on a folder, they can add it to their own OneDrive and see everything in it.

TIP

Moving a shared file breaks the link

Microsoft says links stop working if the file or folder is moved within your OneDrive. If family tells you a link stopped working, share it again.

PART 7

Staying Safe & Fixing Hiccups

The OneDrive scams that target families, keeping your Microsoft account locked tight, and simple fixes when the little cloud complains.

CHAPTER 24

OneDrive Scams: Fake "Storage Full" Emails & Fake Support

Because OneDrive's real warnings mention storage, payments and lost files, scammers copy them. The good news: the fakes follow a pattern, and once you know it, they're easy to spot.

SCAM ALERT

"Your cloud storage is full. Your photos will be deleted today."

This email or text uses fear and a deadline to rush you into clicking a link and entering a card number. Real Microsoft notices don't demand payment through a link within hours. Don't click. Instead, type **onedrive.com** yourself, sign in, and look. If your storage really is full, you'll see it there.

SCAM ALERT

A pop-up with a phone number

A screen says your computer is infected or your files are locked, and tells you to call "Microsoft Support." Microsoft says its real error and warning messages **never include a phone number**. Don't call. Close the browser; if it won't close, restart the computer.

SCAM ALERT

A phone call from "Microsoft"

Microsoft says it will never cold-call you to report a problem with your device, and that caller ID can be faked to look like a real support number. Hang up. Nobody legitimate needs remote access to your computer because of a call you didn't ask for.

SCAM ALERT

Pay with gift cards or Bitcoin? It's a scam

Microsoft says its support will never ask you to pay with gift cards or cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin. Anyone who asks is a scammer, every time.

How to check whether a OneDrive message is real

1. Don't click anything in the message.
2. Open your web browser and type **onedrive.com** yourself (or use your own bookmark).

3. Sign in and look at your storage and files.
4. Also glance at the OneDrive cloud by the clock: a real "full" warning shows there too.
5. Still unsure? Call someone you trust, or call me. A two-minute check is always worth it.

SCAM ALERT

"Someone shared a file with you"

Scammers send fake "shared a document" emails that lead to a fake Microsoft sign-in page. If you weren't expecting a file, check with the sender by phone or a fresh message first. If you do open it, look at the address bar before typing your password.

If you already clicked or called

- **Gave a password?** Change your Microsoft account password right away from a computer you trust, at **account.microsoft.com**.
- **Let someone connect to your computer?** Turn the computer off, and have it checked before you use it for banking.
- **Gave a card number?** Call the number on the back of your card and tell them.
- **Report it.** Microsoft collects reports of tech support scams at **microsoft.com/reportascam**.
- **Be kind to yourself.** These scams are made by professionals. Getting fooled is common, and acting quickly makes a big difference.

CHAPTER 25

Keeping Your Microsoft Account Safe

Everything in OneDrive is only as safe as the Microsoft account it belongs to. A few habits go a long way.

Four good habits

- **Use a strong, unique password** for your Microsoft account, one you don't use anywhere else.
- **Turn on two-step verification.** Microsoft explains it as using two kinds of proof: your password plus a code sent to your phone, email or the Microsoft Authenticator app. Even if someone learns your password, they're stopped without the code.
- **Keep your recovery info current:** a phone number and a backup email address, so you can get back in if you're ever locked out.
- **Never read a sign-in code to anyone** who calls or texts you. A real company never asks for it.

TIP

Where to change these

Sign in at **account.microsoft.com** and look for the security settings. If the menus look unfamiliar, it's a good thing to do with a family member or with me on the line.

Shared computers

If several people use one computer, give each person their own Windows sign-in, so one person's OneDrive isn't syncing everyone's files. And if you sign in at onedrive.com on a library or hotel computer, click your profile picture and choose **Sign out** when you're done.

GOOD TO KNOW

Extra protection for your most private files

OneDrive has a locked folder called **Personal Vault** for things like scans of your passport or Medicare card. Opening it takes a second check, such as a code sent to your phone, and it locks itself when you stop using it. It's free to try with up to three files; Microsoft 365 subscribers can store as many as their storage allows.

CHAPTER 26

Fixing Common Hiccups

When OneDrive isn't happy, it usually tells you with a symbol on the cloud by the clock or a message in its panel. Try these simple fixes in order.

"Processing changes" for a long time

Microsoft suggests pausing and then resuming sync, which often nudges OneDrive along:

1. Right-click the **OneDrive cloud** by the clock.
2. Pause syncing for **2 hours**.
3. Right-click the cloud again and choose to resume syncing.

A red X on a file

A red X means that file couldn't sync. Common reasons Microsoft lists:

- The file is **open** in a program. Save and close it.
- The file name uses a character OneDrive doesn't allow, or starts with a space. Rename it.
- The folder path is too long. Shorten some folder names.
- You're out of OneDrive storage (Chapter 12).

The cloud is gray or says you're signed out

- Click the cloud and follow the prompt to **sign in** with your Microsoft account.
- Check that the computer is connected to the internet.
- Restart the computer. It fixes more than you'd expect.

The cloud is missing entirely

1. Click the small **upward arrow (^)** by the clock to check hidden icons.
2. Still not there? Click **Start**, type **OneDrive**, and open the OneDrive app. The cloud returns.

Outlook.com email stopped arriving

Check your storage. Microsoft says that if you're over your cloud storage or mailbox limit, Outlook.com can't send or receive email. Free up space (Part 4) and mail starts flowing again.

FROM BILL

When to stop and call

If you see warnings about files being erased, an account that's frozen, or anything about ransomware, please stop and call before trying fixes. Those are the times a calm second pair of eyes protects your files.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, the OneDrive words in plain English, and a one-page summary to keep by the computer.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

I've written this manual so you can handle most of OneDrive on your own. But part of being truly helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time, worry or files. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **You think files are missing** after changing a OneDrive setting. Please stop changing things; the files are very often still there, and we can find them together.
- **A "full" warning that's been there for weeks**, especially if Outlook.com email has stopped.
- **You want everything off OneDrive and back on the computer** (Chapter 19), or the reverse, for a big photo collection.
- **A message about ransomware, frozen accounts or files being erased.**
- **You got a scary pop-up, call or email** and aren't sure whether it's real.
- **Setting up a second backup** on an external drive so OneDrive isn't your only copy.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person do it with you.** That's always a good enough reason.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, in plain words, with no talking down. I'll explain what I'm doing as I go, and I'll always tell you honestly whether a paid plan is worth it for you. I can help remotely over the internet or in your home here in Portage County. That's been my way through more than 30 years of helping people with technology.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. If I'm with another client, my AI receptionist, Sophie, will answer and make sure I get your message. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**.

STAY SAFE

How to know it's really me

I'll never call you out of the blue about a problem on your computer, and I'll never ask for gift cards. If you're ever unsure, hang up and call the number above yourself.

Thank you for letting me help you make sense of OneDrive. Take your time, read the Heads up boxes, and remember I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

OneDrive Words in Plain English

Word	What it means
Cloud	Microsoft's computers, holding a copy of your files, reachable over the internet.
Microsoft account	The email and password that own your OneDrive, Outlook.com email and Microsoft 365.
Sync	Keeping files the same in two places. Change or delete one, and the other changes too.
Folder backup	OneDrive protecting your Desktop, Documents, Pictures and other standard folders.
Files On-Demand	Showing all your OneDrive files on the computer while keeping some online only to save space.
Online-only	A file shown with a blue cloud: safe in OneDrive, not stored on this computer.
Always keep on this device	The right-click choice that downloads a file and keeps it on the computer for sure.
Free up space	The right-click choice that removes the computer's copy but keeps the file in OneDrive.
Recycle bin (OneDrive)	Where deleted OneDrive items wait 30 days (personal accounts) before they're gone.
Storage quota	How much online space your account allows: 5 GB free, more with a paid plan.
Unlink	Disconnecting OneDrive from this computer. Your online files stay at onedrive.com.
Personal Vault	A locked folder in OneDrive that needs a second check to open.
Microsoft 365	Microsoft's subscription that adds storage and, on most plans, Word, Excel and Outlook.
Ransomware	A kind of virus that locks your files and demands payment.

CHAPTER 29

Your OneDrive Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it by the computer. The whole manual, boiled down.

Where things are

To find	Go here
OneDrive settings	Cloud by the clock > gear > **Settings**
Which folders are backed up	Settings > **Sync and backup** > **Manage backup**
Download everything / save space	Settings > Sync and backup > **Advanced settings** > Files On-Demand
Which account it's using	Settings > **Account** tab
Pause for a while	Right-click the cloud > pause 2, 8 or 24 hours
Deleted something	**onedrive.com** > **Recycle bin** > Restore (30 days)
How full it is	**onedrive.com** or **account.microsoft.com** storage

The icons

You see	It means
Blue cloud	Online-only. Safe in OneDrive; needs internet to open.
Green check outline	On the computer and in OneDrive.
Solid green circle, white check	Always kept on the computer, and in OneDrive.
Yellow triangle on the taskbar cloud	Storage nearly full.
Red circle on the taskbar cloud	Over the storage limit. Act soon.

The rules that keep files safe

1. Deleting in OneDrive deletes everywhere. To save computer space, use **Free up space** instead.
2. Before turning anything off, choose **Always keep on this device** for files you want on the computer.
3. When stopping backup, read the two choices slowly: **only in OneDrive** or **only on my PC**.

4. Keep a second copy of precious photos on an external drive.
5. Never pay or call from a "storage full" email or pop-up. Type onedrive.com yourself.

Write it down once

Keep handy
My Microsoft account email
My OneDrive plan (free, Basic, Personal, Family)
Renewal date, if I pay
Where my external backup drive is kept

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You've got this

You now know where your files live, what the icons mean, how to handle a full warning, and how to turn things off without losing a thing. That's more than most people ever learn about OneDrive. For anything else, call Bill at (330) 200-8042.