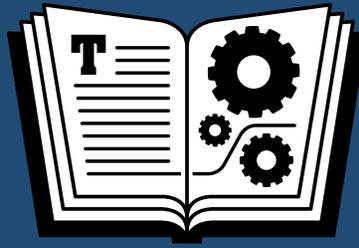


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TAKE CONTROL OF

DROPOX

by **JOE KISSELL**

\$15

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2ND
EDITION

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Dropbox, Second Edition*, version 2.0, published in February 2016 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This ebook was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Kelly Turner.

This ebook explains how Dropbox works for syncing and sharing files. You'll learn how to make the most of Dropbox, including collaborating with other Dropbox users, working with Dropbox-enabled apps, and keeping your data safe.

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What's New in the Second Edition

This fully revised and greatly expanded second edition brings the book up to date with the many changes that have occurred on the Dropbox Web site and in its apps since the previous version of this book was published. The most significant changes to the book are as follows:

- Replaced all the graphics and, in most cases, their accompanying instructions, in order to match changes made by Dropbox
- Added a brief chapter for people who are already familiar with Dropbox but want to make sure they're up to speed on the latest features; see [Check Your Dropbox Skills](#)
- Reworked the chapter formerly called "Sync Your Files" so as to focus on Mac and PC only; see [Sync Files on a Mac or PC](#)
- Created a new chapter with additional details about using Dropbox in a browser; see [Use the Dropbox Web Site](#)
- Expanded the coverage of Dropbox on smartphones and tablets; see [Use Dropbox on a Mobile Device](#)
- Added information on how to determine who can do what with shared files and folders and for how long; see [Manage Permissions and Expiration](#)
- Added a chapter describing the Dropbox Badge, Acrobat integration, desktop notifications, and Mac Finder integration; see [Use Special Mac and PC Features](#)
- Added a chapter covering Dropbox's collaboration features, including Dropbox Team, comments, file requests, and Dropbox Paper; see [Collaborate with Others](#)
- In the discussion of recovering old and deleted files, added a topic about recovering multiple files at once; see [Undo a Deletion Event](#)
- Included a new topic, [Publish a Podcast](#), in the chapter [Do Cool Things with Dropbox](#)
- Added a sidebar explaining how you can [Remotely Wipe Dropbox Contents from a Device](#) in the event that it's lost or stolen

Introduction

Since 2008, Dropbox has enabled millions of people to sync and share files conveniently. The service's popularity is well deserved: it's free (for up to 2 GB of data); it works on virtually every modern computer and mobile device; a vast number of apps and services rely on it for storage and syncing; and it works almost transparently—it's so fast and reliable that a user can easily forget it's there.

For basic file syncing, Dropbox is incredibly easy to use. Download the app, install it, and log in—a process that might take a grand total of two minutes. Pop some files in your new Dropbox folder. Repeat with your other devices and watch your files appear on each. Done!

But behind this simple façade is a great deal of power and complexity. Once you start digging into Dropbox's more-advanced features—sharing files and folders, collaborating with a team, publishing photos, restoring old and deleted files, interacting with Dropbox-enabled apps, and so on—much of Dropbox's self-explanatory simplicity disappears.

I wrote this book to shed light on those powerful but less-than-obvious capabilities. I'm a pretty serious computer geek, and I figure that if Dropbox does something that makes me scratch my head, it must be even more perplexing to people who don't wear propeller beanies and pocket protectors. Not that I do. At least in public.

In this book, I skip lightly over many basics. I won't tell you how to check system requirements, download and run the installer, or move files into and out of folders. You probably know how to do that stuff already (and if you don't, the Dropbox Web site has tutorials that walk you through the whole process). On the other hand, I also avoid technical minutiae. This isn't a book for developers wanting to learn the ins and outs of the Dropbox API, or a guide to hacking the hidden database files Dropbox uses for storing user information. But I think the vast majority of people who are neither absolute beginners nor technical wizards will find something of value in these virtual pages.

Even so, there are many topics about which I could have said a great deal more, and I often chose to err on the side of brevity. For example:

- I cover the Basic (free) and Pro versions of Dropbox, which differ in the amount of storage available, the presence of extra sharing controls in the Pro version, and the fact that paid Pro subscriptions have an optional Extended Version History service (see [The Extended Version History Option](#)). However, I say little about Dropbox Business, which has additional features (and costs much more).

Note: For further details on the differences between Dropbox Basic and Pro, see the support article [What is Dropbox Pro?](#).

- My coverage of Dropbox’s iOS and Android apps is limited to the basics, and I say almost nothing about other mobile platforms.
- For desktop and laptop users, I assume for the most part that you’re using either OS X or Windows; Linux gets only brief mentions.
- Similarly, although I introduce collaboration features such as Dropbox Team and Dropbox Paper, I don’t cover every last feature.

Why Dropbox Is Boring (and That’s Good)

In a way, it feels odd to write a book about Dropbox, because most of what Dropbox does is move data around, automatically and silently, behind the scenes. Although you’ll interact somewhat with the Dropbox app and Web site, Dropbox is primarily infrastructure. Plumbing, if you will. Unless you’re a plumber—or something is broken and you need one—plumbing is pretty boring. For the most part, it hides behind the walls and under the floors, doing its thing. Dropbox is the same way. Ordinarily, you should barely even notice it.

You know what’s *not* boring and requires lots of immediate attention? A broken pipe! Or two apps that have no easy way to share or sync data, forcing you to fiddle with them endlessly to get the results you need. When it comes to infrastructure, trust me: boring is good!

So, when you're reading the parts of this book that aren't too exciting—the parts that explain how Dropbox's plumbing works, so to speak—remember that what you're learning has the potential to be terrifically important in the event that something goes wrong or Dropbox acts in an unexpected manner.

Why Dropbox Is Cool

Now that I've told you why Dropbox is boring, let me show you a different perspective: why it's cool! Just as indoor plumbing makes useful tools like sinks, toilets, and washing machines possible, Dropbox makes a whole range of activities trivially simple that would otherwise be either complex or nearly impossible.

With Dropbox, you can send someone a massive file that would choke any email server. You can collaborate on a document with colleagues across the country or in the next office. You can have all your important documents available in your pocket, even though they won't physically fit on your smartphone. You can set up a new computer without worrying about copying old data to it. You can recover lost data with a few clicks. And you can download new apps that seamlessly sync their data across all your devices. I think that's all mighty cool!

Much of what I've said about Dropbox is true of other services as well, and you may wonder why I singled out this particular service to write about. Among the many other services that do similar things are Bitcasa, Box, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, SpiderOak, and SugarSync. I've tried all of these and more, and some of them are quite nice. But what makes Dropbox my favorite is its near-universality. If an app or Web site connects to just one cloud storage service, odds are good that Dropbox will be that service.

This book helps you put Dropbox to work in the most effective ways while avoiding common frustrations and pitfalls.

Dropbox Quick Start

The way you approach this book may depend on your situation, including your prior experience with Dropbox. Here are my suggestions for different types of readers.

Returning Readers

Did you read the first edition of this book? If so, then regardless of your level of expertise (as indicated in the list below), be sure to start with the brief [Check Your Dropbox Skills](#) chapter, which brings you up to date on important capabilities you should know about.

Dropbox Beginner

If you've never used Dropbox, I strongly suggest reading this book linearly, because earlier chapters provide important foundational information on which later chapters build. Start with [Sync Files on a Mac or PC](#) and keep going—unless you have only mobile devices, in which case start with [Use the Dropbox Web Site](#), followed by [Use Dropbox on a Mobile Device](#). (But, if your reason for starting to use Dropbox is that someone wants to share a folder with you, see “Someone Invited to a Shared Folder or Team,” below.)

Some Dropbox Experience

People who already have Dropbox installed and have used it for basic file syncing can skim most of the [Sync Files on a Mac or PC](#) chapter, but note that it does cover some non-obvious configuration topics. You'll probably find more valuable material starting with [Use the Dropbox Web Site](#). Be sure to read [Share Files and Folders](#), [Use Special Mac and PC Features](#), and [Collaborate with Others](#).

Dropbox Enthusiast

If you already feel completely comfortable working with Dropbox, you'll probably want to focus on the more sophisticated uses covered in [Use Special Mac and PC Features](#), [Collaborate with Others](#), [Work with Apps](#), [Manage Your Account](#), and [Do Cool Things with Dropbox](#).

Someone Invited to a Shared Folder or Team

If you're just starting to use Dropbox because someone else invited you to join a shared folder or team, you may enjoy reading the entire book start to finish, but allow me to highlight some important concepts:

- First, although you must create a Dropbox account (which includes choosing a password), you don't necessarily have to install the Dropbox software on your computer or mobile device. You *can* do everything you need to do within a Web browser, if that's your preference. However, installing the software—especially the desktop software for a Mac or PC—will make it far easier for you to work with files in a shared folder. So, I suggest reading all of the next chapter ([Sync Files on a Mac or PC](#)), especially [Set Up Dropbox on a Mac or PC](#), for guidance before doing anything else.
- Second, those invited to a shared folder may want to read the [Share Files and Folders](#) chapter—or at least the topics [Invite Someone to a Dropbox Folder](#) and [Work with Shared Folders](#)—to understand more about how shared folders work from the perspective of the folders' owners. Those invited to a team should read [Share Files with a Team](#); even though it's written from the perspective of a team creator, it provides important details on how teams work. In any case, be on the lookout for a few interspersed tips starting with the words “Sharing Invitees,” which call out information that may be particularly useful to you.

Check Your Dropbox Skills

This short chapter is just for people who read the first edition of this book, and have therefore been using Dropbox for a while (even if you haven't delved much into its advanced features).

Because Dropbox is so good at working unobtrusively in the background, it's easy to overlook changes. I'm going to assume that you're already clear on fundamentals such as syncing and sharing files and folders, recovering deleted items, and uploading photos from your camera or mobile device. (If you aren't, feel free to consult the relevant chapters for a refresher.) Beyond the basics, though, I want to call to your attention a list of interesting things that have changed in Dropbox over the past couple of years. Follow the links for details:

- **Dropbox Pro:** Dropbox has renamed its free version to Dropbox Basic, while changing the way Pro subscriptions work:
 - ▶ **Storage and price:** Dropbox Pro now has just one pricing tier—1 TB for \$9.99 per month or \$99 per year, the same price the company previously charged for just 100 GB per month. See [Upgrade to Dropbox Pro](#).
 - ▶ **Extended Version History:** The erstwhile Packrat option, which let you store old file versions and deleted files indefinitely, has been replaced with something called Extended Version History, which costs the same but saves this data only for a year. See the sidebar [The Extended Version History Option](#).
 - ▶ **Additional Pro capabilities:** Pro subscribers now have greater control over shared items (see [Manage Permissions and Expiration](#)) and can remotely wipe the Dropbox folder on a lost or stolen device (see the sidebar [Remotely Wipe Dropbox Contents from a Device](#)).

- **Mac and Windows apps:** The Dropbox app for OS X and Windows still syncs files the same way, but also includes a number of interface changes and new features. For example:
 - ▶ **Copy to share:** Instead of *sharing* links to files, which previously required a trip to the Dropbox Web site, you can now *copy* links (and then share them by email, instant messaging, or whatever) without opening your browser. See [Send a link on a computer running the Dropbox app](#).
 - ▶ **Dropbox badge:** Microsoft Office documents stored in Dropbox display a Dropbox badge, which provides a shortcut for sharing, commenting, and more. See [Use the Dropbox Badge](#).
 - ▶ **Acrobat integration:** If you have Adobe Acrobat DC or Acrobat Reader DC installed, you'll find that it can access items in your Dropbox directly. See [Use Dropbox with Acrobat](#).
 - ▶ **Finder integration:** You can now disable integration with the OS X Finder, if you like. When it's enabled, Dropbox adds contextual menu commands, a toolbar icon, and more. See [Use or Disable OS X Finder Integration](#).
- **Web site:** The Dropbox Web site has undergone numerous small changes to its layout and logic, but larger-scale improvements include these:
 - ▶ **Better previews:** You can now view previews of more file types—and can zoom and pan most graphics formats. See [Preview a File](#).
 - ▶ **Editing Microsoft Office documents:** If you subscribe to Office 365, you can edit Office documents stored in your Dropbox from within a browser window. See [Edit Microsoft Office Documents](#).
 - ▶ **Gmail integration:** Gmail users can now attach documents directly from a Dropbox folder—as long as they use Google Chrome with a special plug-in. See [Use Dropbox with Gmail](#).

Sync Files on a Mac or PC

The primary purpose of Dropbox is to keep a set of files in sync across your own computers and mobile devices, and to make them accessible on nearly any other device via a Web browser or app. Anything you put in your Dropbox on one device is synced to the Dropbox servers in the cloud, and from there, synced back to the Dropbox on each of your other devices.

Note: When I write that Dropbox is in “the cloud,” I mean that Dropbox has built an Internet service that uses many servers in a variety of locations to support millions of simultaneous users, each of whom can set up and manage Dropbox on their own. To learn more about the cloud generally, read my book [Take Control of the Cloud](#).

The effect is that whatever you put in your Dropbox on one device automatically appears (and stays up to date as you change it) on all your devices—or at least on all your *computers*. Because mobile devices tend to have less storage space than computers (and are often subject to bandwidth restrictions), the mobile Dropbox apps don’t sync all files automatically, just those you explicitly request.

We begin in this chapter with the most common use case—getting the Dropbox software up and running on your computer(s), finding your way around, and—crucially—making sure your important files and folders begin syncing. A bit later, in [Use Dropbox on a Mobile Device](#), I cover what you’ll need to know when using Dropbox on your tablet or smartphone (whether or not you also use it on a computer). Later still, in [Share Files and Folders](#), I talk about sharing items in your Dropbox with other people.

How Dropbox Syncs So Rapidly

Dropbox uses a number of clever tricks to make cross-device syncing occur with a speed that's sometimes astonishing:

- ✦ **LAN sync:** If another device on your local network is logged in to your Dropbox account, the Dropbox app copies any available files directly from that device rather than downloading them from the cloud (which would take much longer). You can turn this feature off if need be; see [Adjust Dropbox Preferences](#), ahead.
- ✦ **Deduplication:** Dropbox checks to see if any file you're uploading is identical to a file already stored on the Dropbox servers. This need not be a file in your account; it can be any file, uploaded by anyone, anywhere in the world! If so, Dropbox doesn't take the time to upload another whole copy; it simply puts in a pointer to that existing file behind the scenes. The effect is that in some cases, even gigantic files seem to sync to the cloud almost instantly. Dropbox hangs onto that file as long as it's in at least one person's Dropbox.
- ✦ **Delta encoding:** When a file changes on one of your devices, Dropbox doesn't upload the entire file from scratch. Instead, it uploads only the portion of the file that's different. This process is known by various names, including delta encoding, data differencing, and block-level updating.

Set Up Dropbox on a Mac or PC

First things first. If you *don't* have Dropbox on your computer yet, now is the time to [download](#) and install it. If you *do* have Dropbox already, check to be sure it's up to date, because you'll need a recent version to follow the steps in this book. (Dropbox normally updates itself to the latest version automatically, but this process has been known to fail.)

Sharing Invitees: As I mentioned in the [Introduction](#), you can use Dropbox without installing the software on your computer, but the experience is far more convenient and pleasant if you do!

To check which version you have, hover your pointer over the Dropbox icon in your menu bar or system tray. If the version that appears there

Use the Dropbox Web Site

Most of your day-to-day interactions with Dropbox will probably take place in the Dropbox folder on your computer(s) or in the Dropbox app installed on your devices. However, a few activities in Dropbox require a trip to dropbox.com in a Web browser, and there are many additional tasks you can do on the Dropbox site should the need arise—for example, if you’re accessing your Dropbox account using a public or borrowed computer.

Every Dropbox user should be familiar with the ins and outs of dropbox.com. It’s easy to navigate for the most part (and online help is readily available—just click the Help link at the bottom of any page), but in this chapter I want to provide a quick overview of what you can (and must) do on the site and point out a few less-than-obvious things. Because I discuss some of these topics in greater detail elsewhere in the book, I include links to that material as appropriate.

Learn about Web-only Tasks

If you want to do any of the following, you’ll need to go to dropbox.com (and sign in with your username and password, if you haven’t already done so):

- **Share folders:** Although you can initiate sharing of a folder from any device with a Dropbox app, doing so on a computer opens a Web page where you can send invitations via email. See [Share Files and Folders](#) for more details. (You can copy the link to an individual file or folder without going to the Web site, but even then, you might need to use your browser for additional tasks, such as those in the next two bullet points.)
- **Change links’ permissions, passwords, and expiration:** Whether you’ve shared a file or a folder, you may want to control who may access it, add a password, and decide when (if at all) the link expires. See [Manage Permissions and Expiration](#).

- **Remove links:** To stop sharing a file or folder, see [Unshare a Link or Folder](#).
- **Use collaboration features:** Managing a team, commenting on files, requesting files from other users, and working on group documents with Dropbox Paper all require using a browser. See [Collaborate with Others](#).
- **Work with older or deleted files:** To recover an older version of a file, restore a deleted file, or permanently delete a file, see [Recover Older and Deleted Files](#).
- **Manage your account:** If you want to change your password, upgrade to a higher storage quota, or change other account-wide options, you must go to the Dropbox Web site. To learn more, flip ahead to [Manage Your Account](#).
- **Create photo albums:** The photo album feature lets you group pictures together for more convenient sharing and display. I say more about this in [Create a Photo Album](#).

Tip: For a shortcut to the Dropbox Web site, click the Dropbox icon in your menu bar or system tray and then click the globe  icon (or, in Windows, the Dropbox.com link).

Perform Common Web Tasks

Most of the Dropbox Web site is straightforward, and most people should have no trouble finding their way around. However, I do want to call your attention to a few noteworthy items.

Use the Sidebar

Once you've logged in to your account at dropbox.com, the upper-left corner of each page has a list of links called the sidebar (**Figure 10**). Your sidebar may contain a slightly different set of links, depending on which features you've enabled. Click a link to go to the corresponding feature. If in doubt, click Files, which displays the top level of your Dropbox folder; you can navigate elsewhere from there.

Use Dropbox on a Mobile Device

Dropbox offers free [mobile apps](#) for iOS, Android (including Kindle Fire), Windows Phone 7 and later (including Windows 8, 8.1, and 10), and BlackBerry devices.

The features and interfaces of these apps vary by platform. Although the mobile apps aren't quite as powerful as their desktop counterparts, they have most of the same major features (although the BlackBerry version is quite limited compared to the iOS, Android, and Windows Phone versions). For example, iOS, Android, and Windows Phone versions of Dropbox all support uploading files (including Camera Upload), searching, sharing links to files, inviting users to shared folders, offline file support, and file previews. The iOS and Android versions also support commenting, and the Android version lets you edit plain-text files.

One difference from the Mac, Windows, and Linux versions is that mobile versions of Dropbox don't automatically sync all your files, due to limited storage space, cellular bandwidth restrictions, and data transfer limits. Instead, the mobile Dropbox apps list all your files, download only those you explicitly tap, and maintain synced copies (for offline viewing) of only those you mark for offline availability.

Note: If you're looking for a mobile app that offers more features than the stand-alone Dropbox app—for example, editing rich-text files, renaming files, and syncing files with other cloud services—you can choose from among a great many third-party tools. See [Learn about Third-party Apps](#).

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a quick introduction to the iOS and Android versions of the Dropbox app, noting some of the interesting features and how to perform several common tasks.

Use Dropbox in iOS

The Dropbox app for iOS (**Figure 17**) lets you view a list of all your files, preview most files, share links and folders, add comments, and much more.

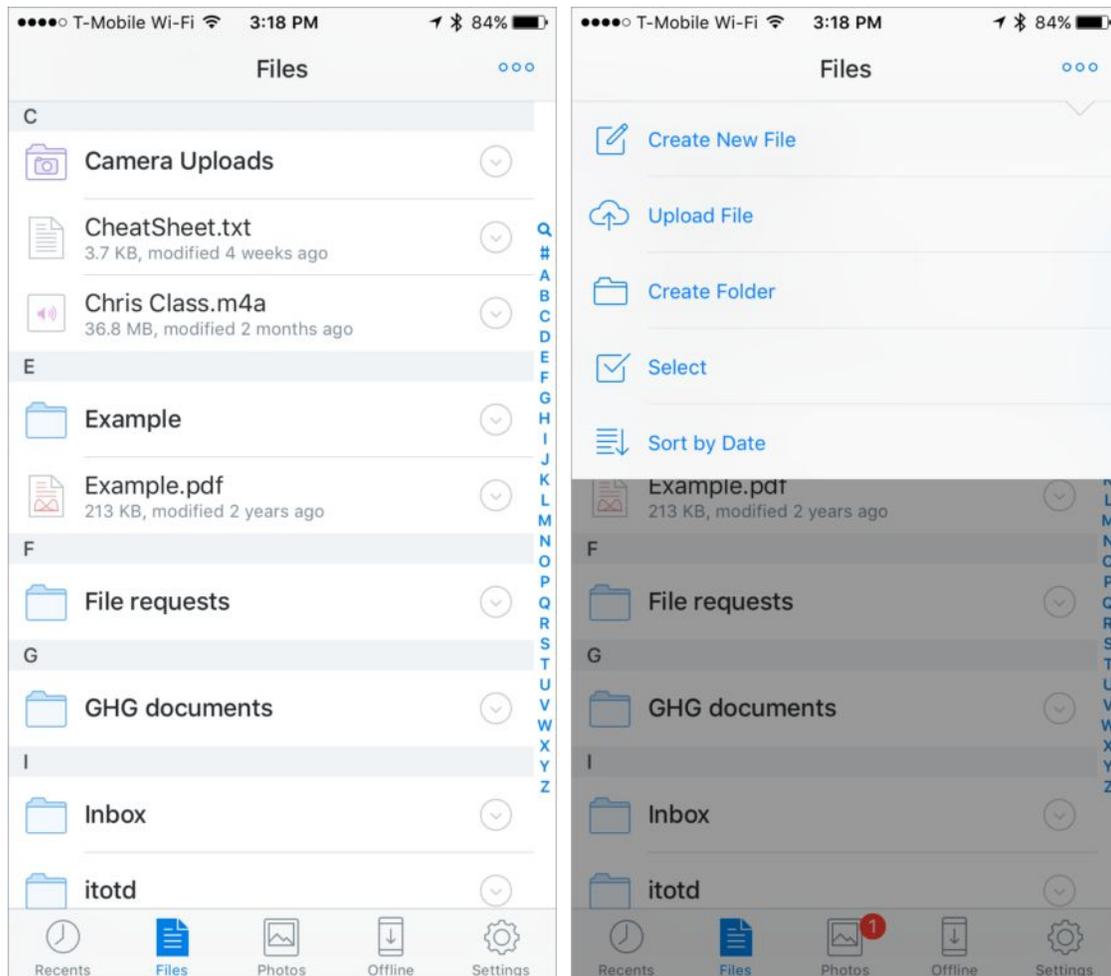


Figure 17: The main view in the Dropbox app for iOS (left) shows your files and folders. Tap the More **☰** icon at the top to display additional options (right).

Learn Dropbox for iOS Basics

Dropbox for iOS has a long list of useful features. I'd like to call your attention to some of the most common and important ones.

Enable a Passcode or Touch ID

Dropbox for iOS supports passcode protection (so no one can access your Dropbox documents without entering a 4-digit numeric

Share Files and Folders

Whereas syncing, which I covered in [Sync Files on a Mac or PC](#), lets you make your own files and folders available across the other devices you use personally, sharing lets you selectively give other people access to items in your Dropbox. Sharing in Dropbox takes three forms, and which one you use on a given occasion depends on your needs:

- **Sending links:** When you send a link to a file or folder (see “Send a Link,” just below), the people who receive the link can download the shared items (or, if they’re Dropbox users, add them to their own Dropbox folders). Once a linked item is downloaded, recipients can do anything with it they like, but they can’t modify or delete the copy in your Dropbox.
- **Inviting users to a folder:** For a more interactive approach, you can invite other people to a folder (see [Invite Someone to a Dropbox Folder](#)). This gives them either read-only or read-write access to anything in it. (Only Dropbox Pro and Dropbox Business users can give someone read-only access to a folder.) Folders shared in this way are replicated in each user’s Dropbox and kept in sync, just as other folders are.
- **Working with a team:** If you create (or join) a team of co-workers, the team gets a main shared folder (inside which team members can create additional folders), and the team creator can invite team members, create groups, manage permissions, and so on. Although sharing files with a team is similar in many ways to the usual way of inviting users to a folder, it’s different enough that I discuss it separately later, in [Share Files with a Team](#).

Note: Yet another type of sharing is available for photos. I discuss that later, in [Work with Photos and Videos](#).

With all three types of sharing, the owner of a file or folder can optionally specify permissions, passwords, and expiration dates; see [Manage Permissions and Expiration](#).

Send a Link

To send someone else a link to a file or folder in your Dropbox, you can work from the Dropbox Web site or from a computer running the Dropbox app. In either case, you'll first tell Dropbox what to share and then decide how to share it.

Send a link on the Dropbox Web site:

1. Log in to your account at dropbox.com.
2. Navigate to the folder that *contains* the file or folder you want to send a link to (that is, don't *open* a folder you want to share).
3. Hover over the item and, from the Share pop-up menu that appears to the right (**Figure 21**), choose Send Link. Alternatively, right-click (or Control-click) the item and choose Share > Send Link from the contextual menu.

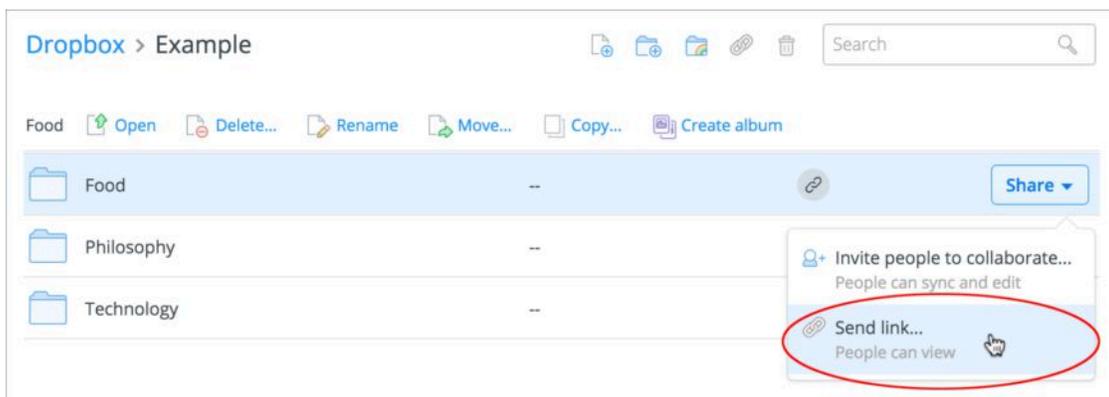


Figure 21: Choose Send Link from the pop-up Share menu to share a link to that item.

4. In the dialog that appears, do one of the following:
 - ▶ *Email a link:* Type the email address(es) of the people you want to invite, enter an optional message, and click Send.
 - ▶ *Copy the URL:* To copy the URL for the shared item to your Clipboard, select it (if it isn't already selected) and choose Edit > Copy. You can then manually email it or send it via instant messaging or some other means.

Use Special Mac and PC Features

Beyond the primary uses for the Mac and PC Dropbox app (such as syncing, sharing, and Camera Upload—all discussed elsewhere in this book), a number of special features have appeared that will appeal to certain users.

In this chapter, I describe the Dropbox badge (for Microsoft Office users) and integration with Adobe’s Acrobat products. Also, in [Manage Desktop Notifications](#), I cover desktop notifications, which are perhaps less special (in that they’ve been around for quite some time) but still worth knowing about—especially if you find them excessively intrusive or annoying.

Later in the chapter, I talk about Finder integration for OS X users in [Use or Disable OS X Finder Integration](#).

Use the Dropbox Badge

On Macs and Windows PCs, if you open a Microsoft Office document that’s stored in your Dropbox, you’ll see the Dropbox logo in a circle  on the right edge of the window. This is the Dropbox badge.

Note: On Windows, the badge supports Office 2007 and later. On a Mac, it supports Office 2011 or later.

By default, a popover (**Figure 35**) with various relevant commands appears next to the badge; you can toggle the display of this popover by clicking the badge  icon.

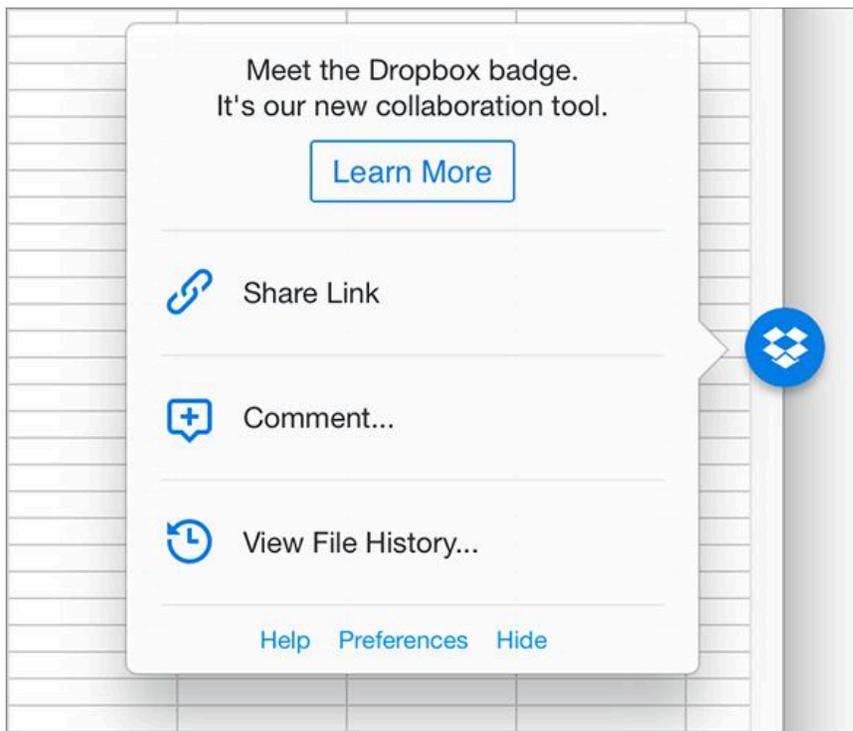


Figure 35: The Dropbox badge displays a popover with commands you may want to perform on this document. Depending on the circumstances, you may see more or different commands here.

The purpose of the badge (or, more specifically, the popover) is to give you a quick shortcut to activities you may want to perform with these Office files:

- **Share Link:** Copy a link to the file to your Clipboard.
- **Comment:** Add a comment to the file using the Dropbox Web site.
- **View File History:** Display previous versions of this file on the Dropbox Web site.

In addition, if the file is in a shared folder, you may see one or more of the following in the popover:

- **Shared Folder Settings:** Click here to open the Shared Folder Options dialog box for this folder on the Dropbox Web site (see [Invite Someone to a Dropbox Folder](#)).
- **Collaborator editing status:** When another person edited the file more recently than you, you'll see Edited by *Name* and how recent that edit was.

Collaborate with Others

Sharing a folder, as discussed in [Invite Someone to a Dropbox Folder](#), is one form of collaboration. In this chapter, however, I talk about four relatively new collaboration features that go beyond simple folder sharing: sharing files with a team (described next); and how to [Work with Comments](#), [Use Dropbox Paper](#), and [Request Files](#). These capabilities are especially useful for coworkers who use Dropbox but don't necessarily subscribe to Dropbox Business.

Share Files with a Team

The Dropbox team feature enables coworkers to share folders with less friction and more control than conventional folder sharing. People who are part of a team get the following features:

- **A team folder:** This folder is automatically shared with all members of your team. You can create subfolders inside it, all of which are likewise shared with all your team members. However, you can also optionally give people outside your team read-only or read-write access to any of these subfolders.
- **The option to connect a personal Dropbox:** Assuming the Dropbox account you use for your team is a work account, you can also connect a personal account such that you can switch between the two accounts easily and access their respective contents on any of your devices (that is, there's no need to sign out, sign back in, and resync).
- **Groups:** Groups are lists of people (within your company and/or outside it) who need access to certain shared items. Having created a group, you can then share an item (inside or outside your team folder) with that group in a single step rather than having to invite each person individually.

- **Additional sharing controls:** The team owner can determine whether other team members with edit privileges can create subfolders inside the main team folder, and whether people outside the team may be given access to any team folders. For individual subfolders within the team folder, the owner can determine whether outsiders may be invited to collaborate and whether links can be shared, as well as whether other team members with edit privileges can manage the subfolder's membership.
- **Dropbox Paper access:** A team can [Use Dropbox Paper](#) to create collaborative documents. (You don't need a team to use Dropbox Paper, but if you have a team, access to Paper is an extra benefit.)

One concept I want to be completely clear about is that Dropbox designed teams to be used for *work*. Most often, this implies that all team members have email addresses in the same domain, or at least work for the same company or organization. If you try to join a team using a *personal* Dropbox account rather than one provided by your employer or used strictly for your business, you probably won't be pleased with your options (described ahead in [Join a Team](#)).

Also, be aware that each person may be a member of only one team. If you work for two organizations, each of which wants you to join a Dropbox team, you'll have to choose one or the other.

Those qualifications having been duly noted, let's look at how you create and configure a team.

Set Up a Team

To create a team, follow these steps:

1. Log in to your account at dropbox.com.
2. Click the Team link in the sidebar.
3. If you created your Dropbox account using a business or work email address, click Create Free Team.

Recover Older and Deleted Files

You know that every file you put in your Dropbox is immediately synced to the cloud, and thence to all your computers. But Dropbox is even more sophisticated than that. Every time you change a file in your Dropbox and save it, Dropbox syncs just the differences from the previous version—a rapid process—and it remembers the way the file looked the previous time it was saved, and the time before that, and so on back to the first time you synced it within the last 30 days (or the last year, with [The Extended Version History Option](#)). So if you ever need to retrieve an older version of any of your Dropbox files, you can. Similarly, even though you may delete something from your Dropbox, causing it to disappear from your other devices, Dropbox remembers it for at least 30 days and lets you undelete it if need be.

Although this combination of features amounts to a powerful pseudo-backup capability (refer to the sidebar [Is Dropbox a Backup Solution?](#), later in this chapter), Dropbox doesn't go out of its way to make it obvious how to restore older or deleted files. You must use the Dropbox Web site, and the process isn't exactly intuitive.

In this chapter, I tell you how to retrieve these phantom files—as well as how to make Dropbox delete something for good, regardless of how long it has been stored.

Work with File Versions

To view or restore the previously saved versions of any file in your Dropbox, follow these steps:

1. Do one of the following:
 - ▶ Sign in to your account at dropbox.com, select the file in question, and choose Previous Versions from the More pop-up

menu at the top. Alternatively, right-click (or, on a Mac, Control-click) the file and choose Previous Versions from the contextual menu.

- ▶ On a Mac, right-click (or Control-click) a file in your Dropbox and choose View Previous Versions from the contextual menu, or choose View Previous Versions from the Dropbox pop-up menu in the Finder's toolbar (see [Adding a Dropbox Icon to the Finder Window Toolbar](#)).
- ▶ On a PC, right-click a file in your Dropbox and choose Dropbox > View Previous Versions from the contextual menu.
- ▶ In a Microsoft Office app on a Mac or PC, click the Dropbox badge and then click View File History.

Dropbox lists the previous versions, each showing the user and the computer or app that modified it last, and the date and time of the last modification (**Figure 66**). If there are many modifications, you may need to page forward or backward to see the one you want.

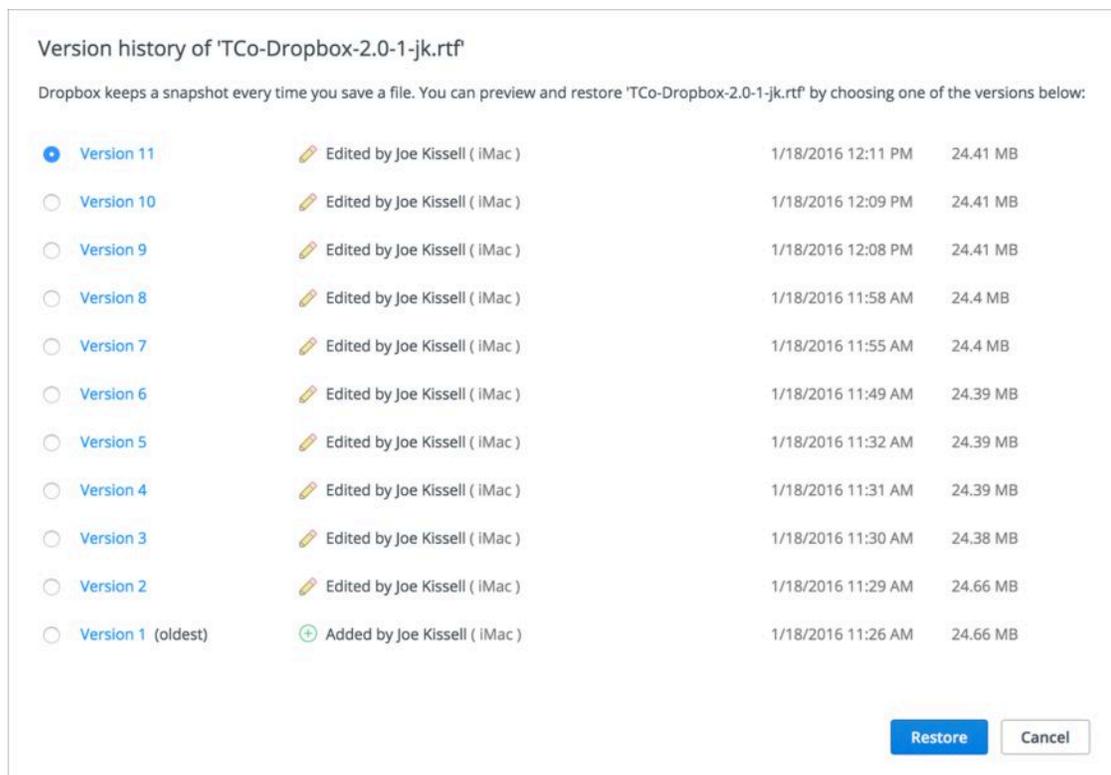


Figure 66: Dropbox lists all the older versions of each saved file.

Work with Photos and Videos

Quick! Think of a type of document almost every smartphone- or tablet-equipped person in the world creates on a daily basis—and might like to store safely in the cloud, sync with other devices, and share with other people. Regardless of all the important business-y reasons to sync and share PDFs, Microsoft Word files, and so on, photos and videos are undoubtedly the documents most frequently uploaded and shared. That makes them a great fit for Dropbox—which, after all, is already great at storing things in the cloud and displaying them for anyone you choose.

Now, you *can* manually drag a photo (or a thousand photos) into your Dropbox, and you *can* share a link to any of them individually or to a folder full of them—and that works surprisingly well. But Dropbox has extra features for photos that give you more flexibility, as well as a simpler, more elegant process for sharing your photos and videos.

Link to a Folder of Photos

Let's start with the most obvious but least exciting option. You create a folder in your Dropbox, drag as many photos or videos into it as you like (in, presumably, a common format such as JPEG or AVI), and share a link to that folder as described in [Send a Link](#). Anyone who follows that link sees a page of thumbnails (**Figure 70**). Boom! Instant gallery!

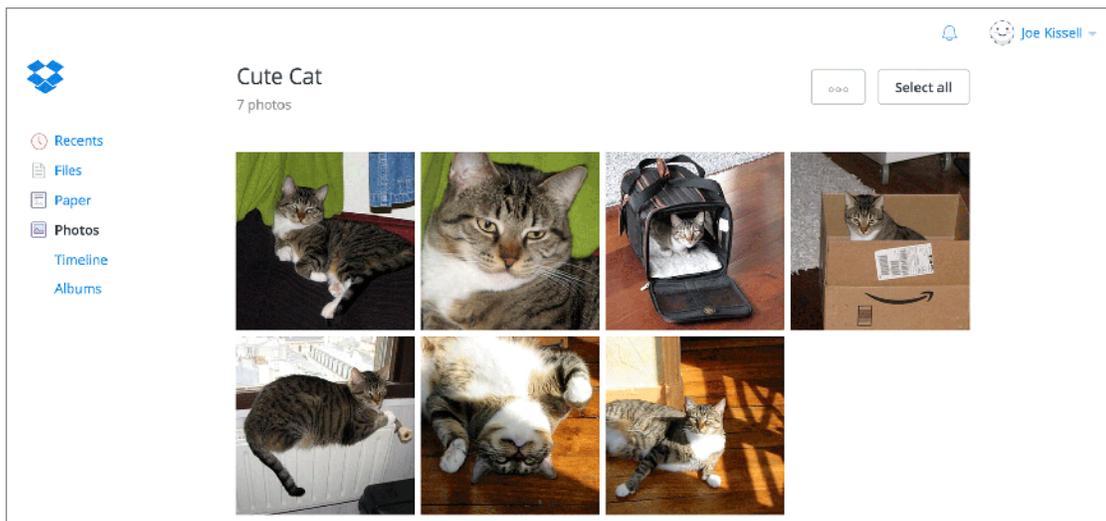


Figure 70: Share a link to a folder full of images, and visitors see something like this.

If you click a thumbnail in the gallery, Dropbox enlarges the image, displaying it against a black background. (If it's a video, click the Play icon in the center of the window to play it.) You can step forward or backward from one image to another, slideshow-style, by clicking the left or right arrows that appear at the bottom of the image or pressing the Left or Right arrow key—and return to the thumbnail view by clicking the X icon in the upper-right corner or pressing Esc.

Note: Unfortunately, Dropbox offers no way to sort or organize the photos in a folder, so slideshows always play in chronological order.

Use Camera Upload

Dragging photos and videos manually to a folder isn't especially hard, but if they're on your camera, smartphone, or tablet, you must transfer them to your computer first. Wouldn't it be nice if you could skip a manual step or two? You can!

Camera Upload is the next step toward smoother photo sharing. This feature enables Dropbox to automatically import and upload any new photos or videos from devices that you attach to your computer—I explain this next. After that, I talk about how to enjoy [Camera Upload on a Mobile Device](#) without connecting to a computer at all. From there, picking photos you want to share is a matter of just a few clicks.

Work with Apps

Using the official Dropbox app on your computers and mobile devices has many advantages, but it only scratches the surface of what Dropbox can do for you. Where Dropbox starts to get much more interesting is when third-party apps tie into it.

For example, many mobile apps connect directly to Dropbox, letting you open and/or save files (for document-based apps) or using Dropbox storage to store app data that then syncs to your other devices.

But I'm not talking about only mobile apps. Besides iOS and Android apps that support Dropbox, there are a number of Web apps (which can monitor and act on changes to your Dropbox at any time), plus Mac and PC apps (which can, in some cases, sync data with Dropbox even if you don't have the Dropbox app itself installed). Any executable code, on any platform, that implements Dropbox support can be considered an "app" for the purposes of this chapter.

The number of such apps is vast—and growing quickly. The Dropbox Web site used to include a list, but keeping track of apps that support Dropbox has become almost as futile an undertaking as keeping track of apps that support typing. So, instead of attempting to be exhaustive, I want to acquaint you with the general kinds of things apps can do, offer hints and background information, and tell you how to authorize and deauthorize Dropbox-capable apps.

Learn about Third-party Apps

To illustrate the variety of uses to which apps have put Dropbox, let me call out a few prominent examples. (I'll return to some of these apps later, in [Do Cool Things with Dropbox](#).) Here are some of my favorite Dropbox-connected apps:

- **1Password:** My favorite tool for managing passwords and other confidential data, [1Password](#) has versions for Mac, Windows, iOS,

and Android platforms. It stores your data in an encrypted format in your Dropbox so that it remains securely in sync across all your devices.

- **DEVONthink:** [DEVONthink](#) is a powerful, Mac-only document management system. Although it supports directly syncing its data with copies running on other Macs (over a local network) or iOS devices (via Wi-Fi), opting for Dropbox as a synchronization hub lets multiple copies of the app stay in sync even when they're on different networks.
- **DropDAV:** [DropDAV](#) is a clever service that, for \$5 per month, lets you access anything in your Dropbox using the WebDAV protocol. In other words, this service extends Dropbox support to lots of apps that don't already have it, but do support WebDAV. Once you sign up, there's no software to download or Web page to visit; all you do is enter your DropDAV credentials in any WebDAV client.
- **Documents:** iOS users who need to move files onto and off of their devices from many different services and work with them in ways iOS doesn't natively permit should take a serious look at Readdle's [Documents](#) for iOS, which connects to Dropbox and a variety of other cloud services, and includes a competent PDF viewer. It makes a good hub for transferring files among services and devices.
- **GoodReader:** In much the same vein as Documents, but with a more complicated user interface, is the old standby [GoodReader](#). GoodReader lets you read and write files in your Dropbox, and supports other cloud services such as Box, Google Drive, and Microsoft OneDrive.
- **IFTTT:** The Web-based service [IFTTT](#) (for "If This Then That") lets you connect many different kinds of Internet services according to "recipes" you specify. They're all of the form, "If *this* happens, then do *that*." For example, you could have a recipe that sends you email or posts on Facebook every time a new file appears in a certain shared Dropbox folder, or a recipe that automatically saves all your Instagram photos to your Dropbox.

Manage Your Account

You may need to do occasional housekeeping on your Dropbox account, such as changing your email address, password, or various preferences; managing linked devices, Web sessions, and apps; and adding extra storage. This chapter covers many of these tasks, with a particular emphasis on Dropbox’s security features and settings.

Configure Account Settings

All the account management tasks I discuss in this chapter can be performed on the Settings page of the Dropbox Web site. To get there, go to dropbox.com, sign in if necessary, click your name in the upper-right corner of the page, and click Settings—or, to get there directly, go to the Dropbox [Settings](#) page.

The Settings page is divided into three tabs: Profile, Account, and Security. Because many of the settings on these tabs are self-explanatory or covered elsewhere in this book, I don’t list them all here, but I recommend browsing through them to acquaint yourself with what’s where. A few quick tips, however:

- **Profile:** To change your email address, photo, or basic preferences, go to the [Profile tab](#) (**Figure 80**).

If you want to automatically download and install “testing” (that is, beta) versions of the Dropbox app, and receive invitations to try out new features before they’re available to the general public, scroll down to the Preferences section at the bottom of the tab and select “Include me on early releases.”

You can also click Extended Version History (under Available Add-ons) to subscribe to the extra-fee service that maintains deleted files and older versions for a year (see [The Extended Version History Option](#)).

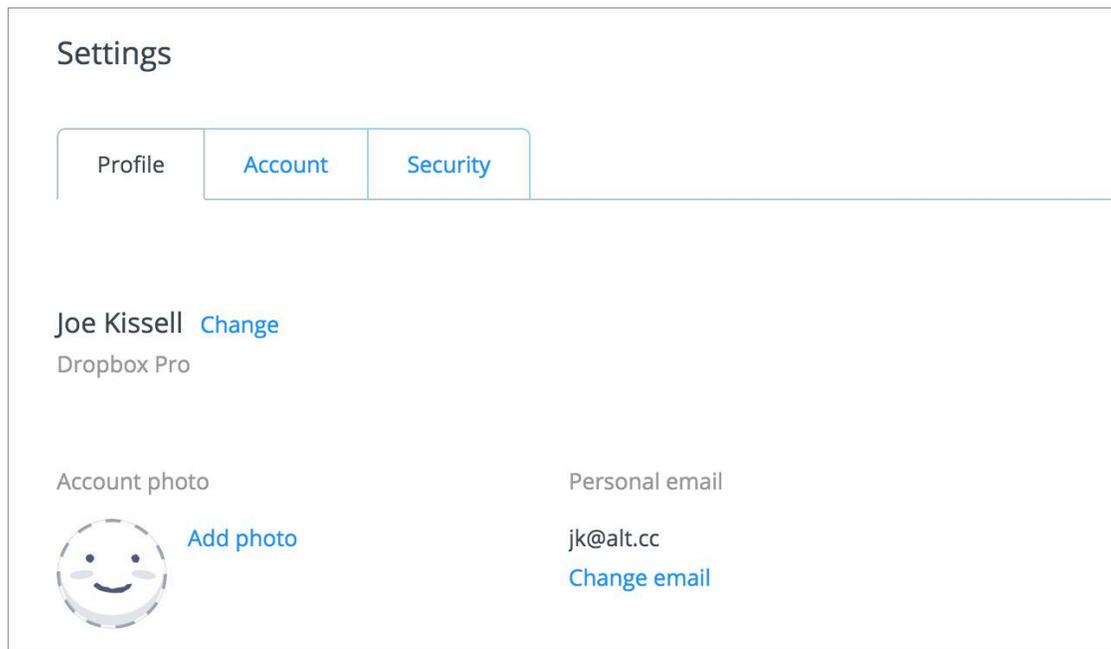


Figure 80: Change personal information, add a photo, and adjust various preferences on the Profile tab.

- **Account:** To see the amount of storage space used, earned, and available; see a link to your billing history; or delete your account, go to the [Account tab](#). The Account tab also lets you connect or disconnect social networking and email (Gmail or Yahoo) accounts.
- **Security:** To change your password; enable or disable two-step verification (discussed a few pages ahead); and manage which devices, browsers, and apps can access your account, go to the [Security tab](#).

Because security is such an important consideration, I want to take a brief detour to discuss how Dropbox does and does not protect your data. Then I'll explain how to perform several security-related tasks.

Understand Dropbox Security

How safe are the files you put in your Dropbox? Is it secure enough for sensitive files? When push comes to shove, can you trust it?

First the good news. Every file Dropbox stores in the cloud is encrypted with 256-bit AES, which is widely considered to be a highly secure encryption algorithm. In addition, all your data is encrypted with SSL

Do Cool Things with Dropbox

I've already mentioned a number of interesting uses for Dropbox, but in this final chapter I want to present an assortment of especially cool things you can do with the service that go beyond the obvious syncing and sharing. My point here is mainly to stimulate your imagination, but if you'd like to read more about any of these topics in a future version of this book, let us know—contact information is in the [About This Book](#) chapter.

Email a Large File

One of the handiest uses of Dropbox is sharing a link with someone in place of sending email attachments. Most email servers have limits on attachment sizes (25 MB is common), and even when that limit is high, sending large files by email is both time-consuming and unreliable. Plus, you'll probably end up with an extra copy of every attachment you send in your Sent mailbox, devouring valuable disk space.

Instead, put whatever you planned to email in your Dropbox, and [Send a Link](#). The email will go out instantly, and you'll have much greater confidence that the recipient will get the attachments intact. (Mac users running OS X 10.10 Mavericks or later have a similar capability, called Mail Drop, built into Apple Mail, but it uses iCloud instead of Dropbox for storage—and has a number of restrictions, such as the fact that Apple stores linked files only for a month.)

Note: A third-party plug-in called CargoLifter previously enabled Apple Mail users to send Dropbox links. The developer discontinued that product and replaced it with [MailButler](#), which requires a paid monthly subscription for more than basic usage.

Better still, if you use Gmail, a Chrome plug-in lets you send links right from your Compose window (see [Use Dropbox with Gmail](#)); Dropbox plans to offer the same capability to Outlook.com users soon.

Access Any File on Your Computer

Earlier, I explained that you can use symbolic links to force Dropbox to [Sync Folders Outside Your Dropbox Folder](#). However, with a third-party product called [Spotdox](#), you can go even further, using Dropbox to give yourself access to *any* file, anywhere on your computer, from another device.

Spotdox—which involves both an app and a paid Web service—doesn't sync every file on your computer to the cloud, but rather uses Dropbox as a conduit. Once you've set it up on a device, you can sign in on a second device (a computer or iOS device with the Spotdox app installed, or a Web browser), view all the files on the first device, and download anything you may need that wasn't already in your Dropbox.

Spotdox is available for OS X, Windows, iOS, and Android.

Publish a Blog

If you want to blog from a fast, reliable platform, you may already have one—your Dropbox! Earlier I said that Dropbox, by itself, isn't the best place to host a Web site, but numerous free services can perform a bit of behind-the-scenes magic to convert plain-text files in a Dropbox subfolder into an elegant, modern-looking blog, in some cases complete with an RSS feed.

Here's how they work. First, you use your favorite text editor or word processor to write blog posts, and store them as plain text files in their own folder within your Dropbox. (iPad text editors with direct Dropbox support are especially good for this purpose.) You can use a simple markup language called [Markdown](#) to create links, add images, and apply styling such as headings, italics, block quotes, and bulleted lists.

Then, a Web app grabs the text files from your Dropbox, converts the Markdown-formatted text into static HTML files, and publishes them on another Web server at a URL you choose. Sometimes this process is entirely automatic; other times it requires a click or two.

Teach This Book

Dropbox is extremely useful for individuals who use it only to transfer data between their devices, but it really shines when you use it to collaborate with colleagues or share files with friends and family. In our years of using Dropbox, we've found that while Dropbox is easy, there are a number of important lessons to convey and gotchas to warn about. If you'd like to use this book as the basis of a presentation, class, or other teaching opportunity, we'd like to help:

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Hire the Author

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About the Author



Joe Kissell is the author of numerous books about technology, including [*Backing Up Your Mac: A Joe On Tech Guide*](#) and [*Take Control of Your Online Privacy*](#). He is also a contributing editor to TidBITS and a senior contributor to Macworld, and has appeared on the MacTech 25 list (the 25 people voted most influential in the Macintosh community) since 2007. Joe has worked in the Mac software industry since the early 1990s, including positions managing software development for Nisus Software and Kensington Technology Group.

When not writing, Joe likes to travel, walk, cook, eat, and practice t'ai chi. He lives in San Diego with his wife, Morgen Jahnke; their sons, Soren and Devin; and their cat, Zora. To contact Joe about this book, [send him email](#) and be sure to include [Take Control of Dropbox](#) in the subject of your message so his spam filters won't intercept it.

Shameless Plug

On my site [Joe On Tech](#), I write about how people can improve their relationship with technology. The site also features my own series of ebooks on topics such as backing up and maintaining your Mac. I'd be delighted if you stopped by for a visit! You can also sign up for [joeMail](#), my free, low-volume, no-spam mailing list, or follow me on Twitter ([@joekissell](#)). To learn more about me personally, visit [JoeKissell.com](#).

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