

Tech Snacks: Microsoft OneDrive

As of April 2022, the MSU campuses will no longer have access to Box, our current cloud-based file-sharing program. Instead, you are encouraged to use OneDrive, which is available through Microsoft Office 365. All students, faculty and staff have free access to Office 365.

How do I access my OneDrive account?

1. Open a web browser and go to <https://login.microsoftonline.com/>.
2. Enter your **NetID@msun.edu** in the “email or phone” box (note that this is not an actual email address, just your account ID!).
3. Enter your **NetID password** in the “password” box. This is the same password you use to log into campus computers, MyInfo, and Brightspace.
4. Click **Sign In**.

What are the benefits of OneDrive?

OneDrive is similar to Box in a few ways: it lets you store files in the “cloud” rather than on a local drive and enables easy sharing between users. With Office 365/OneDrive, you can also collaborate on documents in real-time while changes are automatically saved (similar to the way Google Drive works).

Cloud-based — Access your files from anywhere and from any device. You just need to log in to your account at <https://login.microsoftonline.com/>. Because the files are stored in the cloud, you don’t need to store copies of your documents on different computers and confused about what version you’re on—there is only one copy. Changes are automatically saved every few seconds and you don’t have to worry about losing your work if your computer freezes up. Your up-to-date document will always exist in the cloud until you intentionally delete it.

If you like to have your documents on your desktop and want to use the non-cloud-based version of Word, Excel, etc., you can download the OneDrive desktop app to your computer. It will sync your local files with your OneDrive account and vice-versa. This will work on a Mac or PC. You’ll also need to have MS Office software installed on your computer. The desktop in your office has it preinstalled, and you can use the MSUN license to install it on up to 5 devices.

Collaboration-friendly — When you’ve created a document or a folder containing documents, you can enable various permissions settings for collaborators: view only, comment only, edit. You can make it so that anyone in the world with the link can see the document; anyone in your organization (with a NetID) can see the document after logging in; or just specific people can see the document. You can either share a link with collaborators or prompt OneDrive to send them an email telling them that they have access to your document. There is also a “version history” that lets you see what changes have been made by whom so that you can revert back to previous versions if needed. A built-in commenting/chat feature makes communication easy.

A note on file co-ownership: Similar to Google Drive and Box, OneDrive allows users to add co-owners of files in their OneDrive account. Unfortunately, if the original owner of the file leaves the university, their files will be deleted with their account. The best way

to transfer ownership of files is to share the file with someone else, and have them download the file and then upload it into their own OneDrive.

Integrated with Microsoft Teams — If you use Microsoft Teams for collaborative work and share files with your team, these files are stored in OneDrive. Likewise, files and folders created in Teams are visible in OneDrive.

Has a variety of privacy and document protection features — These allow you to: password-protect a document; set an expiration date for sharing; block viewers' ability to "download and print," and prohibit copying and pasting. It is still possible, however, for viewers to take screenshots of your document.

Note on accessibility: Blocking viewers' ability to download, print and copy/paste will also stop screen readers from reading the document for accessibility.

Mobile-friendly (somewhat) — There are OneDrive apps for both Android and iOS that make it easier to edit documents from your phone if needed. Students who are in quarantine/isolation and do not have access to a PC might find this to be a useful tool for completing work by using their smartphones or tablets.

Operating system agnostic (unless you want the desktop app) — Since OneDrive can be accessed and used via a web browser, a specific operating system is not required. Many students use Chromebooks, on which software like MS Office cannot be installed. OneDrive may be a reasonable solution for them because they can use the cloud-based version of Microsoft Word, Excel, etc. (Note: If you are teaching specific processes in Word, Excel, etc., there may be functionality differences in these versions.)

Free for MSUN faculty, staff, and students — Faculty, staff and students have an account that is available to them for the entirety of their time at Northern.

Classroom Uses for OneDrive

Brightspace — If you have a document uploaded in Brightspace that needs periodic revising, consider just adding a link to a OneDrive cloud file rather than constantly re-uploading the file (e.g., for a course reading schedule or other course timeline that may need to be adjusted).

Homework — Students can work on shared files using OneDrive (for group assignments or projects).