

# Sync without the cloud.

Replace Dropbox with Syncthing — peer-to-peer, no server.

Your files sync directly between your own devices. No account, no monthly fee, no company holding a copy — and on your home network they never leave the building.

## Who this is for

Anyone who just wants folders kept in sync across a few devices without renting cloud storage, and who doesn't need a web server or shared team space. No hosting or command line required.

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# Why Syncthing instead of Dropbox

Dropbox caps the free plan at 2 GB across 3 devices and keeps a copy of everything on its servers. **Syncthing** is different by design: it syncs files *directly* between your devices, peer-to-peer, with no central server and no account. If your devices are on the same network, the files never leave it.

## How it's different

This is device-to-device sync, not cloud storage. There's no website to log into and no server to run — each device talks straight to the others. Great for keeping your own machines in sync; not the tool for public share links or team web access (that's Nextcloud).

## 1 · Install Syncthing on each device

Syncthing runs on Windows, macOS, Linux and Android — install it on every device you want to keep in sync. It has no separate server component; each install is a full peer. You manage it through a local web interface in your browser.

## 2 · Understand the pairing model

Instead of accounts, Syncthing gives each install a unique **Device ID** — a 56-character string generated on first run. Two devices trust each other by exchanging these IDs and approving them on both sides. Nothing is stored centrally; trust is direct between peers.

## 3 · Pair two devices

- 1 On each device, open the Syncthing web interface and find its Device ID (Actions → Show ID).
- 2 On device A, click **Add Remote Device** and paste device B's ID. Do the same on device B with device A's ID.
- 3 Each side gets a prompt to approve the new device — accept it. They're now connected.

## 4 · Share a folder

- 1 On one device, add the folder you want to sync (Add Folder) and give it a label.
- 2 Under the folder's Sharing tab, tick the device(s) to share it with.
- 3 Accept the incoming folder on the other device and choose where to store it. Syncthing now keeps it in sync automatically whenever both are online.

## Sync is not backup

Because changes propagate, deleting a file on one device deletes it on the others. Turn on **File Versioning** in the folder settings so Syncthing keeps old copies — and still keep a real backup of anything irreplaceable.

## 5 · Verify

- Create a file on one device and confirm it appears on the other within moments (both must be online).

- Check the folder shows 'Up to Date' on both sides.
- Enable File Versioning on important folders before you rely on it.
- Move your Dropbox files into a synced folder, then cancel Dropbox.

## Common snags

| Symptom                      | Fix                                                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Devices won't connect        | Both must be running and online at once; check the Device IDs match. |
| Nothing syncs                | The folder must be shared AND accepted on both ends.                 |
| A deletion spread everywhere | That's sync working; recover from File Versioning or backup.         |

### Found this useful?

This guide is free — pay what you want if it saved you time. More offline & one-time-purchase alternatives to subscription apps, plus other migration guides, at **payoncehq.com**.

Sources: official Syncthing documentation (docs.syncthing.net). Steps current as of 2026; check the project pages for the latest. Independent guide, not affiliated with Syncthing or Dropbox.