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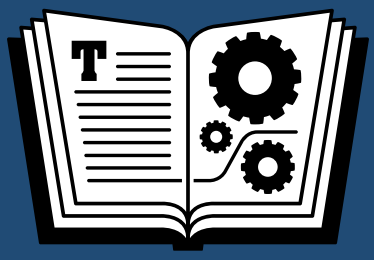

TAKE CONTROL OF

iCLOUD

by JOE KISSELL

$15

3rd EDITION

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of iCloud, Third Edition,* version 3.0, published in November 2014 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Kelly Turner.

iCloud is the latest incarnation of Apple's suite of Internet services, in the lineage of MobileMe, .Mac, and iTools. This book helps you make sense of iCloud, configure it for your needs, and choose the best ways of using each feature.

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Basics

To review background information that might help you understand this book better, such as finding System Preferences and working with files in the Finder, read Tonya Engst's free *Read Me First: A Take Control Crash Course*, available on the Web or as a standalone ebook in PDF, EPUB, and the Kindle's Mobipocket format.

What's New in the Third Edition

This heavily revised third edition covers changes in OS X 10.10 Yosemite and iOS 8, as well as significant feature changes in the iCloud service and Web site since the last version of the book was published only 6 months ago. Numerous topics were added and, in some cases, rearranged or rewritten—and almost every page had at least a few updates. Here are the highlights:

- Added a chapter to bring existing iCloud users up to speed with the latest feature changes and storage options; see Catch Up with iCloud Changes.
- Revised the list of Major iCloud Features to reflect the current truth, and updated About iCloud Storage with Apple's new pricing tiers.
- Added a new chapter all about Family Sharing; see Use iCloud Family Sharing.
- Revised the Manage Your Photos chapter to include information on how to Use iCloud Photo Library.
- Added an extensive discussion of iCloud Drive; see Keep Documents and App Data in Sync.
- Explained how to Use Mail Drop in Apple Mail for Yosemite.
- Expanded the chapter Use the iCloud Web Site to include The Photos Web App and The iCloud Drive Web App.
- Added a detailed chapter on security and privacy issues in iCloud; see Manage iCloud Security and Privacy.

Introduction

Anyone who has been using Apple devices for more than a few years has surely heard of—and most likely uses—iCloud, Apple's collection of online services. Although iCloud, which launched in October 2011, replaced MobileMe (which, in turn, followed .Mac and iTools), it has been morphing into something much different from its predecessors.

A year ago, I said the basic concept of iCloud was that your documents, music, TV shows, movies, photos, contacts, calendars, passwords, and other data should propagate to all your devices so immediately and automatically that you never think about where your data is anymore.

All that is still true, but now, with iOS 8 and Yosemite, iCloud's tentacles reach even deeper into Apple's operating systems and apps. Almost any feature you use on a Mac, iOS device, or Apple TV wants to involve iCloud in some way. You *can* use your Apple device without an iCloud account, but many common tasks will be more awkward or even impossible. And, from Apple's point of view, why would you want to use a device without iCloud? Accounts are free and the iCloud infrastructure makes everything work together much more smoothly.

Were you laughing a bit just now? Yeah, me too. iCloud is great when it works, but it's so complex that problems are bound to occur, and frequently do. Since Apple has made so much of your experience dependent on iCloud, network outages, software bugs, and server malfunctions can make the simplest tasks frustrating.

And what about privacy? You can sync your photos and videos instantly across all your devices—great! And the data from your iOS devices is automatically backed up to the cloud—great! And you can share anything with a couple of taps or clicks—great! But if someone guesses or finds your iCloud password, or you tap the wrong button by mistake, your private moments, your home address, and tons of other personal details could be plastered all over the Internet. That's no longer a hypothetical worry; it's front-page news.

Another sore spot is that, although iCloud is pretty good at keeping your own data in sync across your own devices, it's less good at sharing data between users. New features like iCloud Drive and Family Sharing are steps in the right direction, and they're useful as far as they go. But you still can't easily share a whole address book with your spouse, a folder full of mixed documents with a work group, or a keychain containing usernames and passwords with your family.

There's also the question of hardware support. A handful of iCloud's features are available on Windows, and a smaller subset can be used (after a fashion) on Linux and Android devices. But Apple is in the business of selling hardware, so it stands to reason that iCloud works best on Apple devices. Recent-vintage Macs, iOS devices (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch), and Apple TVs offer the best support for iCloud.

In this completely revised third edition of *Take Control of iCloud,* I focus on what I think of as the interesting parts of iCloud. I show you what iCloud is capable of, how to think about it, and how to put its key features to good use. In the process, I hope to expose you to useful capabilities you never knew existed. But I also tell you how to keep private information secure (even if it reduces iCloud's utility), point out cases in which iCloud may not be the best tool, and occasionally mention other options you can consider.

iCloud is constantly changing. Therefore, I don't attempt to give you specific instructions for using every last feature—I'm confident that you can figure out how to send an email message or delete a contact, even if the exact steps change tomorrow. But I do try to help you grasp what iCloud is capable of and decide how best to use it.

For the most part, I assume your operating system(s) are recent—namely, OS X 10.10 Yosemite or later, iOS 8.1 or later, Windows 7 or later, and Apple TV software version 7 or later. I also assume that all your iCloud-connected apps (such as iTunes, iPhoto, and Pages) are up to date. Although I occasionally call attention to differences in operating systems, I don't give detailed instructions for using iCloud with older software.

iCloud Quick Start

Although you can skip around freely in this book to learn about the topics that interest you most, I strongly encourage you to read (or at least skim) the first two chapters—Get to Know iCloud and Set Up iCloud—before moving on to the rest. Those chapters provide important foundational information, without which much of the material later in the book may not make sense. But if you already read an earlier edition, you can skip those chapters and instead start with Catch Up with iCloud Changes, which gives a quick overview of what's changed in iCloud since the previous edition.

Get started:

- Discover what's new in the last year or so in Catch Up with iCloud Changes.
- Learn about iCloud features in Get to Know iCloud.
- Set up your Mac(s), PC(s), and iOS device(s) to use iCloud. See Set Up iCloud.
- Get your family set up to share purchases, calendars, location data, and more. See Use iCloud Family Sharing.

Keep your data in sync across devices:

- Use iTunes in the Cloud—and related capabilities for other media—to access your purchased media (including music, movies, TV shows, books, and apps) everywhere. Read Keep Your Media in Sync.
- Use iCloud Photo Library to sync all your photos between iOS devices and with the cloud, My Photo Stream to put your recent photos on all your devices, and iCloud Photo Sharing to share photos with other people. See Manage Your Photos.
- Keep your documents and app data current everywhere using iCloud Drive (or, for devices running older operating systems,

Documents in the Cloud) and other forms of in-app syncing. See Keep Documents and App Data in Sync.

- Make sure your major forms of personal data (email, contacts, and calendars) are automatically mirrored across all your devices. See Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync.
- Learn about syncing Reminders, Notes, and browser data. See Sync Other iCloud Data.
- Keep usernames, passwords, and credit card numbers in sync across devices, generate new random passwords, and edit your saved credentials as you Work with iCloud Keychain.

Use the other iCloud features:

- Access Web-based versions of the core iCloud apps on nearly any platform. See Use the iCloud Web Site.
- Locate a wayward Mac or iOS device, or find a friend or family member. See Find My Nouns.
- Learn how iCloud can back up and restore crucial data from your iOS devices in Back Up and Restore iOS Data.
- Apple TV owner? Find out which iCloud features your set-top box can use and how. Read Use iCloud on an Apple TV.
- Access stuff on a faraway Mac. Read Use Back to My Mac.
- Update account details. See Manage Your Account.
- Keep your iCloud account safe and protect your private data. See Manage iCloud Security and Privacy.

Catch Up with iCloud Changes

If you've been using iCloud awhile—and especially if you read the previous edition of this book—you may be most interested in the bits that have changed in the last year. This chapter highlights the major changes you'll want to take advantage of, points you to chapters where I discuss those features in detail, and offers a suggestion about managing your iCloud data storage.

iCloud Feature Changes

With the release of iOS 8 and OS X 10.10 Yosemite in late 2014, Apple expanded iCloud's reach, added two significant new capabilities (and a visual overhaul) to the icloud.com Web site, and updated numerous Apple apps on both platforms with enhanced iCloud support. But if you're still using an older version of iOS or OS X, you won't be able use all the new iCloud capabilities—and if you're using a mixture of older and newer devices, you may have to make some difficult decisions.

Here are the major changes you should know about:

- **iCloud Photo Library:** iCloud continues to offer My Photo Stream for pushing your most recent photos to your other Apple devices, but now adds iCloud Photo Library, a more ambitious feature that promises to sync your *entire* photo library across your devices, along with offering access to all your photos and videos at icloud.com.

  There are two small gotchas. First, it's not integrated into iPhoto or Aperture, so full Mac support will have to wait until Apple releases its all-new Photos app for OS X in early 2015. And second, unlike My Photo Stream, iCloud Photo Library counts against your iCloud Storage quota—although at least prices have decreased dramatically (see "Storage price drops," later in this list).

To learn more about the differences between iCloud Photo Library and My Photo Stream, see Understand iCloud Photo Options. Then, read Use iCloud Photo Library for all the details.

- **iCloud Family Sharing:** Members of the same household who wanted access to the same apps and media without having to purchase them multiple times previously had to employ awkward workarounds. Family Sharing eliminates the need to use a separate iCloud account just for shared purchases, provides a convenient and safe way for kids to purchase media from Apple with parents' consent, and throws in a shared photo album, calendar, reminder list, and more. See Use iCloud Family Sharing.

- **iCloud Drive:** It's not *quite* a resurrection of iDisk, but at long last, iCloud users can see the files from all their iCloud-enabled apps in one place, organize them just like files in any other folder, and access files from one platform more easily on another. You can also share documents stored in iCloud Drive with other people—either read-only or with read-write access. As long as you can get past about 37 weird and inscrutable qualifications—including the fact that you need iOS 8 or Yosemite to use iCloud Drive—you'll find file access to be much more useful than in the old Documents in the Cloud model. Read Use iCloud Drive.

- **Storage price drops:** Some of the new iCloud features use more of your online storage, and Apple still offers only 5 GB for free. Boo! On the other hand, prices for additional storage have plummeted—for example, you previously would have paid $40 per year for an extra 20 GB of storage; now you can increase your storage to a total of 20 GB for only $0.99 per month. And (skipping over a couple of intermediate levels) a full terabyte of storage—way up from the previous maximum of 50 GB—costs $19.99 per month. See Manage Your Storage.

- **Mail Drop:** An extremely useful iCloud feature that appears only within the Apple Mail app in Yosemite, Mail Drop takes the pain out of sending large attachments. Drag a file into a message—up to 5 GB in size—and Mail uploads it to iCloud in the background, and then

sends a download link in the message rather than including the whole file as an attachment. That eliminates multiple problems, including bounced messages when either your server or the recipient's server can't handle large files. And, although it's an iCloud feature, it works even for non-iCloud email accounts. See Use Mail Drop.

- **iCloud Web site changes:** The iCloud Web site has adopted the look and feel of iOS 8/Yosemite. The iWork apps have more features than they did last year. And the site now includes an iCloud Drive app and a Photos app (to show the contents of your iCloud Photo Library). See Use the iCloud Web Site.
- **Security improvements:** Apple has dramatically expanded the use of two-factor authentication, an optional feature that improves your security. In addition, third-party apps that connect to iCloud (such as email clients) now use app-specific passwords, and a Web page lets you determine, before buying a used iOS device, whether Find My *Device* has been disabled. Read Manage iCloud Security and Privacy.

Storage Checkup

I mentioned that some of the new iCloud features (notably iCloud Photo Library and iCloud Drive) eat into your storage quota, but that Apple has reduced the cost of extra storage to the point where it shouldn't be a hardship for most users to store as much data as they want. So, if you're still trying to make do with the 5 GB Apple offers everyone for free, my professional advice is to *give up!* It's no longer worth the effort to avoid what could be a 99-cent monthly charge.

Even a backup of a single iOS device can easily surpass 5 GB, after all, and by the time you add saved email, files in iCloud Drive (or Documents & Data), and other smaller bits of information, you're in for some frustration if you try to whittle the figure down artificially just to avoid paying a dollar a month. With 20 GB (or more) of storage,

you can freely back up your iOS devices, add files to iCloud Drive, and so on, without worrying that you're going to bump into your limit.

On an iOS device, go to Settings > iCloud > Storage > Manage Storage—or, on a Mac, go to System Preferences > iCloud > Manage. There you'll see how much total storage you have, how much each iOS device is using for backups, and how much each app is using.

In an emergency, you can delete any app's data here, but remember that doing so wipes out all copies of it everywhere, so unless you have an independent backup, I don't recommend doing this.

Once again, refer to Manage Your Storage for complete details on deleting online data and buying additional storage.

Get to Know iCloud

Before you dive in and start setting up and using this mysterious thing called iCloud, you should take a few moments to get your bearings and understand what you're dealing with.

In addition to explaining what you can and cannot do with iCloud, this chapter discusses what you need to know About iCloud System Requirements, About Your Apple ID, and About iCloud Storage.

What Is iCloud?

If you've followed Apple's Internet services over the years from iTools through .Mac to MobileMe, you may be tempted to think iCloud is just the latest name for essentially the same thing. But it's not! Despite some features that have carried over from earlier services, iCloud is different from its predecessors in several crucial ways.

Likewise, while iCloud has a few features in common with other online services such as Dropbox, Google Docs, and Microsoft Office 365, iCloud is designed to achieve different goals, making it more different than alike.

iCloud doesn't have much…*thingness*. It's not a physical object you can touch, and it's not software you can install. It's not a Web site—at least, not entirely. You can't buy it, although you may pay for extra features. In fact, referring to iCloud as a single entity is misleading. The name iCloud is really just an arbitrary label for a collection of features, services, settings, and APIs (application programming interfaces), joined by a thread of relying on communication over the Internet between Apple devices (Macs, iOS devices, and Apple TVs) and Apple's servers in the cloud.

Perhaps a more interesting question to begin with is "What is iCloud *for*?" I have a few answers to that one:

- **iCloud lets Apple cut the cord.** Until a few years ago, the only way to move certain kinds of data on and off your iOS device was to connect it to a Mac or PC with a USB cable. The connection to a computer was required to activate the device; to back up or restore its data; to sync photos, music, movies, books, and apps; to transfer documents to and from certain apps; and to install iOS updates. With iCloud, Apple has cut the cord: your iOS device can operate as a completely stand-alone product. If you don't have a Mac or PC to connect to, there must be some other repository for your data, and some other mechanism to get it to and from your device. iCloud serves those purposes, letting you transfer all these types of data to and from Apple's servers using either Wi-Fi or cellular connections.
- **iCloud helps your devices integrate with each other.** If you have more than one digital device—say, two Macs, or a PC and an iPhone, or an iPhone and an iPad, or an iPod touch and an Apple TV—it's only natural to want all your devices to share data. With iCloud, syncing encompasses many kinds of data and requires less effort than before. In fact, the word "sync" almost becomes an anachronism; for the most part, iCloud pushes new or changed data almost instantly to all your devices. You can switch between devices with impunity, knowing your data is always wherever you need it.
- **iCloud replaces (some) local storage with streaming.** Related to the last point, iCloud reduces your need to keep copies of all your important media on all your devices. As long as you have a good wireless Internet connection, your iOS devices can now do what the Apple TV has done all along—fetch the content you want, in near-real time, from the cloud. This makes it practical to get by with less storage space (hey, the second- and third-generation Apple TV have only 8 GB of flash RAM!). You no longer have to make tedious and difficult decisions about which content to put on which device when you have loads of data; in a sense, everything can be everywhere, automatically. Yet you can still store local copies of crucial data for times when an Internet connection is unavailable.

- **iCloud facilitates (limited) sharing.** Although sharing data between people has never been one of iCloud's strengths, it has made important strides in that direction recently. For example, Family Sharing enables family members to easily share purchases, photos, a calendar and reminder list, location information, and more. iCloud Drive lets you send read-only links to your files, or permit others to collaborate with you in real time using iWork apps. And the Mail Drop feature in Yosemite lets Apple Mail send ginormous email attachments without overloading either the sender's or recipient's mail server.
- **iCloud increases security and convenience.** With Find My iPhone, iCloud lets you not only locate a wayward device, but, if necessary, remotely lock it or even erase its data securely. Find My Friends extends this concept to enable you to find *other* people with iOS devices. With Back to My Mac, you can use file sharing or screen sharing to connect to your Mac from a remote network, giving you one more reason not to worry about syncing files. And even if you find yourself without any Apple device at your disposal (unthinkable!), you can get to your email, contacts, calendars, and documents (or find your wayward Mac or iOS device) from nearly any computer with an Internet connection and a Web browser.

Tip: If you're curious to know the extent to which Apple encrypts your iCloud data and what other privacy and security measures are in place, read iCloud: iCloud security and privacy overview.

- **iCloud is infrastructure.** Apple designed iCloud to be mostly invisible; you shouldn't have to think much about iCloud from day to day. With everything working correctly, iCloud functions in the background, like your home's electrical wiring or plumbing, transporting the right bits to the right places without any manual intervention. You'll notice iCloud's effects—increased ease of use, less aggravation, more flexibility—even if you're not conscious of interacting with it deliberately.

Major iCloud Features

iCloud is bound to gain and lose features as time goes on, and as Apple's hardware and software evolve. But as of November 2014, here are the major features in iCloud, all of which I discuss later:

- **Media syncing:** With iCloud, you can buy music, apps, or books from Apple's iTunes Store on any Mac, PC, or iOS device and have them automatically pushed to all your other devices—a capability that Apple calls "iTunes in the Cloud." You can also re-download previously purchased media (including TV shows and movies) from any of your devices. An optional paid feature, iTunes Match, extends iTunes in the Cloud to work with music from sources other than the iTunes Store.

  Although Apple describes all these features as part of iCloud, that's somewhat misleading, in that anyone with an Apple ID can use all these capabilities, even without an iCloud account. However, any Apple ID *can* be used for iCloud, and perhaps Apple draws less of a distinction than I would between iCloud accounts and other Apple IDs. In any case, since Apple considers all this part of iCloud, I discuss it briefly in Keep Your Media in Sync.

- **Family Sharing:** Introduced in late 2014 with iOS 8 and Yosemite, iCloud Family Sharing lets families of up to six people link their individual accounts in a way that gives each person access to media purchased by the others; a shared calendar, reminder list, and photo album; and location information. All family members can use a single credit card for all their Apple media purchases, and children can use the Ask to Buy feature to get parental approval for downloads. See Use iCloud Family Sharing.

- **iCloud Photos:** Continuing with the theme of automatically propagating data, iCloud Photo Library promises to sync all your photos across all your Apple devices, although it's currently available only for iOS and at icloud.com (with Mac support expected in 2015). A feature called My Photo Stream pushes new photos (but not videos) you take with your iOS device, as well as photos you

import from your camera onto your computer or iOS device, up to the cloud and then down to other devices. My Photo Stream works with iPhoto or Aperture on a Mac, as well as on Windows—but it's otherwise more limited than iCloud Photo Library. iCloud Photo Sharing extends the photo stream concept, allowing you to share albums (containing photos and/or videos) with others and stream photos from iCloud to an Apple TV. See Manage Your Photos.

- **Syncing documents and app data:** iCloud Drive provides centralized cloud storage for your documents, synced automatically across your devices, and available from within supported iOS and Mac apps. It's not quite like Dropbox (or the old iDisk feature from MobileMe), but it's in the ballpark. iCloud Drive requires Yosemite or later, or iOS 8 or later; Macs running Mavericks or earlier, and devices running iOS 7, can use a more limited capability called Documents in the Cloud. In addition, some Mac and iOS apps that don't use documents per se can take advantage of iCloud's infrastructure for storing and syncing other data, such as preferences and database entries. See Keep Documents and App Data in Sync.

- **Mail, Contacts, Calendar, browser data, Reminders, and Notes:** With this collection of services, iCloud keeps your personal data in sync between your devices, and lets you access the data (except for browser bookmarks, tabs, and Reading List) from any Web browser. Mail Drop, a new feature in Apple Mail for Yosemite, uses iCloud to simplify sending large attachments. See Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync and Sync Other iCloud Data.

- **iCloud Keychain:** iCloud Keychain is a way of securely keeping passwords and credit card details in sync among devices. iCloud Keychain includes other features, too, such as a random password generator built into Safari. See Work with iCloud Keychain.

- **icloud.com:** Apple's icloud.com Web site contains Web apps, accessible from nearly any browser, that let you work with many types of data—email, contacts, calendars, reminders, notes, photos, and iCloud Drive documents—as well as Web-based versions of Pages, Numbers, and Keynote. See Use the iCloud Web Site.

- **Find My *Device* and Find My Friends:** As I mentioned a couple of pages back, Find My iPhone (or iPad or iPod touch) lets you determine the exact location of any of your iOS devices, while Find My Mac does the same for your Macs; you can even remotely lock or wipe any of these devices. (I refer to all these services generically as "Find My *Device*.") Find My Friends lets you locate friends—via their iOS devices—who have given you permission to follow them. (I use the even-more-generic "Find My Nouns" to refer to all the finding services generally.) See Find My Nouns.
- **iCloud Backup:** iCloud securely—and automatically—backs up all the personal data from your iOS devices to Apple's servers and lets you restore it over the air. See Back Up and Restore iOS Data.
- **Apple TV:** Your Apple TV can access not only the media you purchased from your other Apple devices but also your iTunes Match media, if any; My Photo Stream; and photo streams shared with you by others. See Use iCloud on an Apple TV.
- **Back to My Mac:** With Back to My Mac, you can use file sharing and screen sharing on a local Mac with a remote Mac, even if the remote Mac is behind a router or gateway that uses NAT (network address translation). See Use Back to My Mac.

Peer-to-Peer Networking

iCloud has another useful capability that Apple hasn't publicized much. In the PDF document OS X Mountain Lion Core Technologies Overview (still relevant for newer operating systems), Apple says: "iCloud detects when you have multiple devices on the same local network, and it copies the content directly between them rather than going through the cloud. It eventually copies the content to the cloud, as well, to enable remote access and backup."

That means you won't waste your Internet bandwidth downloading data that's already on another local device—plus copying that data will be quicker over your local network.

About iCloud System Requirements

Since iCloud is a heterogeneous collection of services and capabilities, it doesn't have a fixed set of system requirements. Some aspects of iCloud require iOS 8.1, OS X 10.10 Yosemite, Windows 7 or later, or a third-generation Apple TV (although most services are supported as far back as iOS 5, 10.7.2 Lion, the second-generation Apple TV, and Windows Vista). Other parts of iCloud are accessible from nearly any Web browser or from a third-party client app.

Of course, Apple would prefer you to have the latest version of everything (and, as I mentioned in the Introduction, this book largely assumes that you do), but the fact that you're still using a Mac running 10.5 Leopard, for example, doesn't mean iCloud will be entirely useless to you. After all, many features are available in a Web browser. For compatibility details, see Apple's iCloud system requirements page.

One thing that page doesn't tell you, however, is what you'll need to access email, contacts, and calendars using third-party client software. So here are the details:

- **Email:** Any IMAP client with SSL support, on any platform, should be able to connect with your iCloud email account. The server addresses may be different from what you expect, however; see the sidebar Access iCloud Mail with Other Email Clients.
- **Calendars and Contacts:** iCloud uses standard protocols—CalDAV and CardDAV—for calendars and contacts, respectively. However, for reasons that aren't entirely clear to me, not all CalDAV and CardDAV clients can connect to iCloud accounts.

  Third-party Mac calendar apps that work with iCloud include BusyCal and SOHO Organizer. SOHO Organizer and BusyContacts are the only third-party Mac apps I'm aware of that can connect to iCloud for contact synchronization. Under Windows, eM Client also supports iCloud calendars and contacts.

About Your Apple ID

In order to use iCloud, you need a special username called an *Apple ID*, which identifies you across numerous Apple products and services. You probably already have one, and if not, it's easy (and free) to get one.

Although Apple once allowed any unique name to be an Apple ID, today, Apple IDs are email addresses. If you already have an email address ending in `@icloud.com`, `@me.com`, or `@mac.com`, that's an Apple ID for sure. If you used a different email address when buying something from Apple, registering for an Apple developer program, or using any of several other Apple services, that address is also an Apple ID. If you aren't sure whether you have an Apple ID at all or whether a certain address is an Apple ID, you can check at the Apple ID site.

That's all fairly straightforward, but iCloud's reliance on Apple IDs has several consequences that may not be apparent—for example, you might have more than one Apple ID and not know which one to use for iCloud, or you might share an Apple ID with someone else. Read on to find out what to do about cases like these.

What If I Have Multiple Apple IDs?

In a perfect world, each person would have exactly one Apple ID, all the person's data and purchases would be associated with it, and the question of which Apple ID to use where wouldn't come up. However, for a variety of reasons, a great many people have accumulated more than one *personal* Apple ID over the years.

Note: People who were members of MobileMe or .Mac may have me.com, mac.com, and/or icloud.com addresses with the same characters before the `@` sign. Apple regards those variants as identical; use any of them to sign in to iCloud. But read the sidebar Apple IDs with Multiple Email Addresses, ahead, for qualifications.

Apart from the clutter of multiple accounts and having one's data in several places, there's one big practical problem with having multiple

Apple IDs. Whereas you can copy personal data, such as contacts and email messages, from one account to another, you can't do the same thing with *purchases*. Once you've made a purchase from Apple with a given Apple ID, the purchase is tied to that ID permanently. You can't transfer a purchase to a different Apple ID, and you can't merge two Apple IDs in order to consolidate your purchases into one account.

iCloud Family Sharing (see Use iCloud Family Sharing) essentially erases the irritation of purchases under multiple Apple IDs within a family. Each person signs in with an individual Apple ID, but because they're all linked (up to six of them), each family member can access purchases the others have made.

But if Family Sharing isn't appropriate for your situation—namely, you need to share purchases with someone who's not in your family—you can often work around the problem. Although iTunes, the Mac App Store, the iOS App Store, and the iBooks Store can each log in with only one Apple ID at a time, you can switch between IDs without losing any content. In the relevant app, find the Sign Out button or menu command, and then sign back in with the other account. Note that doing so requires you to know (or have someone else enter) the password for the other account.

Some people have multiple personal Apple IDs because they have more than one iCloud account that they need to keep separate—perhaps a home account and a work account, or a personal account and a club account. It is possible to sign in to multiple iCloud accounts on a Mac at the same time, although as I explain ahead shortly, doing so carries a few restrictions.

What If I Share an Apple ID with Someone?

Although Apple expects Apple IDs (and iCloud accounts) to be one per person, many people share a single account with a spouse, an entire family, or another group. Although I've met couples who truly do want to share *everything* in common, including email, the most common reason for sharing Apple IDs apart from consolidating purchases (for which purpose you should now Use iCloud Family Sharing if possible)

is sharing contacts. Because iCloud doesn't offer any form of contact sharing, some people have an extra iCloud account for the express purpose of adding it to multiple users' devices in order to achieve the effect of shared contacts without having to share *all* data.

If you share an Apple ID, I explain just ahead how to handle that. But even if you do have a shared account, you should *also* have an individual account, if for no other reason than to keep your personal settings separate from those of other family members. If you have *only* a shared account, you should create an individual account for yourself when setting up iCloud.

Which Apple ID Should I Use for iCloud?

All that said, which Apple ID should you use when you set up iCloud? Here are my suggestions. If you have…

- **A single, *personal* Apple ID:** Stick with that account. If you have an Apple ID that is an email address but is not a me.com, mac.com, or icloud.com email address, you'll need to create an icloud.com address to use with Mail in iCloud. The first time you turn on Mail in the iCloud preference pane in Mac OS X, the iCloud app in Windows, or Settings > iCloud in iOS, you're asked to pick an account name to go before `@icloud.com`. After you've done so, you can use either your existing Apple ID email address or your new icloud.com address to log in to iCloud.
- **A single, *shared* Apple ID:** Create a new Apple ID for yourself. Afterward, you can open System Preferences > Internet Accounts (called Mail, Contacts & Calendars prior to Mavericks) and add the shared Apple ID as a secondary account (see Work with Multiple iCloud Accounts).
- **Multiple individual Apple IDs:** Use the Apple ID associated with whichever you consider your primary or personal account—the one that contains most of your data, or the one you used for the most Apple Store purchases. Later, you can open System Preferences > Internet Accounts (or Mail, Contacts & Calendars)