

Git is a command line program which allows you to track versions of any code or plain text documents that you create. Like the “track changes” feature of a word processor Git keeps track of who made particular changes, the time and date of those changes, and where the changes were made. If a critical file gets deleted by accident, or if you make a breaking change to your code and you want to try to figure out where the breaking change was made, you can use Git to restore the deleted file or find the new bug in your program. Git organizes groups of files that you’re tracking into a **repository**, which is just a directory where all of the changes to files in that directory are tracked. Git can also help you collaborate with others when you’re writing software. As Karl Broman says (paraphrasing Mark Holder): “Your closest collaborator is you six months ago, but you don’t reply to emails.”

GitHub is a website that provides remote Git repositories. A remote repository is just a Git repository that you’re able to access over an internet connection. GitHub allows you to create public remote repositories for free, and anyone can see your code in these public repositories. If you want to keep your code private then you can pay GitHub for private remote repositories.

If you’re working on code together with a friend GitHub can help you sync changes to code files between you and your friend. There’s also a social and community aspect to GitHub, since you can watch other programmers develop their projects. GitHub also makes it easy to jump in and help somebody with their project. GitHub offers many other useful features which we will discuss at length.

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