What is cloud computing?

Simply put, cloud computing is the delivery of computing services—including servers, storage, databases, networking, software, analytics, and intelligence—over the Internet ("the cloud") to offer faster innovation, flexible resources, and economies of scale. You typically pay only for cloud services you use, helping you lower your operating costs, run your infrastructure more efficiently, and scale as your business needs change.

Top benefits of cloud computing

Cloud computing is a big shift from the traditional way businesses think about IT resources. Here are seven common reasons organizations are turning to cloud computing services:

Cost

Cloud computing eliminates the capital expense of buying hardware and software and setting up and running on-site datacenters—the racks of servers, the round-the-clock electricity for power and cooling, and the IT experts for managing the infrastructure. It adds up fast.

Speed

Most cloud computing services are provided self service and on demand, so even vast amounts of computing resources can be provisioned in minutes, typically with just a few mouse clicks, giving businesses a lot of flexibility and taking the pressure off capacity planning.

Global scale

The benefits of cloud computing services include the ability to scale elastically. In cloud speak, that means delivering the right amount of IT resources—for example, more or less computing power, storage, bandwidth—right when they're needed, and from the right geographic location.

Productivity

On-site datacenters typically require a lot of "racking and stacking"—hardware setup, software patching, and other time-consuming IT management chores. Cloud computing removes the need for many of these tasks, so IT teams can spend time on achieving more important business goals.