

Welcome to CloudTools!

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What is it?

CloudTools is a platform for collaborating on animation/vfx in the cloud. It builds a project directory structure and gives you the tools work efficiently with others, via services such as Dropbox and Google Drive.

Why should I work this way?

If you're collaborating with others on side projects, chances are everyone's working at home. With everyone sending attachments around back and forth, things can get messy and disorganized very quickly. A consistent, centralized directory/file structure will keep things organized and accessible. But doing so can be complicated and slow via FTP, even with mapped network drives. These kinds of setups are also difficult to create and manage for the less tech savvy members of the project.

CloudTools leverages the simplicity of cloud storage services to keep access to the centralized file structure easy for everyone. Users simply have to install the cloud service's desktop app, copy and paste a bit of code in Maya, and they're all setup!

An additional benefit is that everyone is working with mirrors of the central structure, so once the drive is synced, everything is accessible locally and therefore loads as quickly as possible.

Do you have a preference which service I use?

I don't get paid by either :(so I won't try to convince you to use a particular service. What I can say is that at the time of this writing, Dropbox seemed to better handle modifications of permissions and file management. It is more expensive and not as feature rich as Google Drive, but there were definitely fewer problems.

What do I need?

CloudTools is currently written around an Autodesk Maya-based pipeline. Future development will extend functionality to other software, but currently, only Maya 2011 and later is supported.

How can I get started?

If you plan on being the administrator of the project, go to /CloudTools/CT_Public/Setting up CloudAssets at home - ADMIN.txt. This file will step you through initial setup. If you're not the project admin, you can read /CloudTools/CT_Public/Setting up CloudAssets at home - USER.txt instead.

What features/tools are included?

Cloud tools includes the following features and tools:

- Project file structure builder.
- Scene setup tool for quick opening a file, building a scene setup or environment configuration.
- Incremental save/publishing.
- Scene file portability across all Maya versions after 2011.
- Animation widgets.

Why is the file structure setup this way?

This is a big question and is answered in CloudTools Pipeline.pdf.

Are there any 'gotchas'?

Since everyone is working with a mirror of the central structure, mistakes can happen, people can accidentally delete stuff. File management UIs have been created that should handle all file operations, so there should not be much, if any need for users to poke around in the file structure. Still, it's highly recommended that whoever is managing the file structure take regular backups to ensure everything is protected.

Also, because the file structure is mirrored, users should always wait until their desktop cloud app is finished syncing before working.

What's in development now?

The app is currently in Beta so it only contains its core functionality - project setup, scene and file management, and a handful of animation widgets. There also isn't much documentation yet. Maybe I'll start a Wiki or something..

Upcoming features include:

- File sync warnings
- File checkout
- Animation caching
- Support for Nuke, Houdini and other 3D apps