# The "Share" button vs. the "Copy Link" button

**Below is a table outlining the characteristics and challenges associated with SharePoint Online permissions when users share sites and content using the "Share" button versus the "Copy Link" button. The table covers key aspects such as permission behavior, user experience, and potential challenges.**

| Aspect | "Share" Button | "Copy Link" Button |
|---|---|---|
| **Functionality** | Allows users to share a site, document, or folder by directly inviting specific users or groups via email or by generating a sharing link. | Generates a sharing link for a site, document, or folder that can be copied and shared manually via email, chat, or other platforms. |
| **Permission Options** | Offers granular permission levels: View, Edit, or Full Control (for sites). - Options include Anyone with the link, People in your organization, People with existing access, or Specific people. - Can restrict sharing to read-only or allow editing. | Similar permission options: Anyone with the link, People in your organization, People with existing access, or Specific people. - Permissions are set when creating the link, but the link can be shared broadly without direct recipient control. |
| **User Experience** | Streamlined for inviting specific users or groups via a dialog box. - Sends email notifications to recipients with the link and context. - Users can add a custom message to the invitation. | Generates a link instantly, which users can copy and share manually. - No built-in email notification; users must share the link themselves. - Requires separate communication to provide context or instructions. |
| **Permission Control** | More controlled, as permissions are tied to specific users or groups invited. - Admins can configure restrictions (e.g., limiting external sharing or requiring approval). - Can revoke access directly from the sharing interface. | Less controlled, as the link can be forwarded by recipients to others. - "Anyone with the link" option can lead to unintended access if not restricted. - Revoking access requires disabling the link or changing permissions manually. |
| **Auditability** | Sharing actions are logged in audit logs, including who shared, with whom, and what permissions were granted. - Easier to track specific user invitations. | Sharing actions are logged, but tracking is harder if the link is shared broadly (e.g., "Anyone with the link"). - Audit logs may not capture who accessed the content via the link unless specific users are authenticated. |
| **External Sharing** | External sharing is possible if enabled by admins, with options to require sign-in or limit to specific domains. - Notifications can alert admins to external sharing actions. | External sharing is possible but riskier with "Anyone with the link" due to potential forwarding. - No direct notification to recipients; external users need a Microsoft account or guest access (unless anonymous). |
| **Challenges** | Users may inadvertently grant excessive permissions (e.g., Edit instead of View). - External sharing may bypass organizational policies if not properly restricted. - Users may not understand permission inheritance or group-based access. | Risk of oversharing, especially with "Anyone with the link" or "People in your organization" options. - Links can be shared beyond intended recipients, leading to unauthorized access. - Lack of notification makes it harder to ensure recipients receive or act on the link. |

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| **Security Considerations** | More secure for internal sharing, as access is tied to specific users or groups. - Admins can enforce expiration dates or password protection for external links. - Requires user awareness to avoid oversharing. | Higher risk for anonymous links, as they can be shared without authentication. - Links may remain active longer than intended if not manually revoked. - Requires careful configuration to avoid data leaks. |
| **Use Case Suitability** | Best for controlled sharing with specific individuals or teams. - Ideal for scenarios requiring clear permission assignment and auditability. - Suitable for formal collaboration workflows. | Best for quick, informal sharing where users need flexibility to distribute links. - Useful for sharing with a broader audience (e.g., organization-wide announcements). - Less suitable for sensitive content due to potential for link forwarding. |
| **Admin Oversight** | Admins can restrict sharing to specific users, groups, or domains. - Can require approval for external sharing. - Easier to monitor via audit logs and sharing reports. | Admins can limit link types (e.g., disable "Anyone with the link"). - Harder to track usage of widely shared links. - Requires proactive monitoring to detect misuse. |

## Additional Notes

- **Permission Inheritance:** Both methods respect SharePoint's permission inheritance unless explicitly broken. Users must be cautious when sharing at the item level to avoid unintended access to parent containers.

- **Configuration:** Admins can mitigate risks by configuring sharing settings in the SharePoint Admin Center, such as disabling external sharing, limiting link types, or setting expiration dates for links.

- **User Training:** Both methods require user education to prevent oversharing and ensure compliance with organizational policies.

- **Best Practices:** Use the "Share" button for controlled, recipient-specific sharing and the "Copy Link" button for broader, less sensitive sharing scenarios. Always set expiration dates for external links and review permissions regularly.