

Getting Started with Google Documents

Using Google's online applications to create, modify, and share documents

Google Documents is one of the services that come with a Gmail account. You need a Gmail account first to begin creating and sharing documents with Google Docs.

With Google Documents you can create writing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms that you can put on the web or send via email.

Your Google documents are stored on Google's servers, so you can access them from anywhere you have an Internet connection. No special software is needed on your computer to use Google Apps, just your web browser.

Once you are your Gmail account, click on the "Documents" link in the menu at the top of the page.

In the upper left corner you can create a new document by selecting the Create New... selection. You can create a new document, spreadsheet, presentation, or form, and you can also create a folder to organize your documents. You can open templates that others have created and you can save your own templates for your own work.

When you create a new document, you can add and format text just the way you would in a word document or design program on your computer. When you save the document it is saved onto Google's servers rather than on your own computer.

You can share your document so that other Gmail users can either simply view it or so that they can actually help you make changes to it. This is a way for several people to collaborate on the same document. You can view the revisions made to the file under File > See revision history. You can share any of your documents in the All Items screen.

When you are in the document-editing screen you can also select Publish as Web Page under the Share pull-down in the upper right. This gives you a web link by which someone without Gmail to view your document. You could use this as a quick way to post a poster or announcement on the web.

You can also send someone the document as an email attachment, and when you do so you can choose what format the document should be sent as.

You can upload your own documents to your Google Documents from your computer. You can upload rich text, plain text, html, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and many other kinds of documents, and Google will convert them to Google documents for you. Then you can work on them online and share them the usual Google ways.

You can also upload documents and uncheck the *Convert documents, presentations, and spreadsheets to the corresponding Google Docs formats* setting, and Google will just store them for you so that you can share them over the Internet. This way, Google doesn't convert them, but simply allows you to view them and to download them.

When you create a new form document, Google lets you create an online form (like for a survey or opinion poll) and when anyone to whom you send the link responds, the results are added to an online spreadsheet. You can send a link to the form on the web, and you can embed the form on your website.

You can download your documents as any of a number of formats, including standard office formats and PDF. This is handy when you need to convert a Word or Excel document to a PDF file – just upload it to your Google Documents, open it up and make sure the formatting hasn't changed too much, and download it as a PDF.

Google Apps don't have access to all the fonts you have on your machine, just a standard set of fonts. If you upload a file that uses fonts that Google Apps doesn't have, it will convert them to whatever it thinks is close.

You can create columns of text by inserting a table. It isn't as handy as doing columns in Word, but it will do in a pinch.

If you have pop-ups blocked in your web browser, some features will not be able to work (some previews, for instance). If this happens just turn off the pop-up blocker in your web browser, but remember to turn back it on again later.

You can translate one of your documents (or someone else's) into a different language. Just open the Tools menu and select Translate.

You can create a presentation and share it in real-time online, to present a PowerPoint-like presentation on speakerphone to a group from anywhere in the world.

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