



Getting started with Google Docs

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Documents



Spreadsheets



Presentations



Drawings



Forms

Google Docs is a suite of free 'office' applications that are online (in 'the cloud') rather than installed on your own computer. They include word processing, spreadsheet, presentation and more. The huge advantage of working with a 'cloud' application rather than a local one is that documents are available from any computer with an internet connection. When you create a document it will initially be private, but can be shared with others. Once shared you know that the document you are working on IS ALWAYS the up to date version because there is only the one document which everyone accesses to make revisions. Microsoft Office documents can be imported to be edited and shared. PDF and graphic files can be uploaded to be stored and shared too. You can create folders and sub folders of documents, and share entire folders if you wish. To get a quick overview of Google Docs it is well spending 1 minute viewing a video at <http://www.youtube.com/docs>

If you have a Gmail (googlemail) account or another existing Google account you can easily add Google Docs to it. Start at <http://docs.google.com> and either log in or set up a new account if you need one. Remember to let others know the email address you register with so they can share documents with you.

When viewing 'All items' in your Google docs account if others have newly shared or updated documents for you they will be in bold at the top of the list. Your own latest revisions are also sorted by date order. You can of course search through your documents.

When sharing a document (blue 'Share' button top right) you can decide if the users you invite are 'editors' (can make any changes); can 'comment' (not change the text but leave margin notes); or 'viewers' (can only view a document but not to make any changes). You can assign different rights to different people. The document 'owner' is the only person who can actually delete a document entirely. Note too that documents are automatically saved as you work on them. There is no 'save' menu option!

If others are online looking at the same shared document as you this is shown by their user name appearing toward the top right next to a colour. You can actually text chat in real time if you wish, and you will see them editing in real time!

'Comments' are incredibly useful if you want to add a margin note for others to see without messing up the document itself. Highlight some text to annotate and choose 'comment' from the 'insert' menu. Others can reply to your comments too.¹

'See revision history' is like 'track changes' in Microsoft Office, and available from the 'File' menu. Should you want to retrieve some old text you could find it in revision history, copy it, then close the revision history view to get back to the current version, and then paste the text you retrieved back into the current document.

Documents can be downloaded in common Office file formats and as PDF (the most useful format to ensure everyone sees a no longer editable file with the same page layout regardless of their computer). Comments are NOT downloaded with documents.

¹ Comments work in spreadsheets as well, but here are attached to cells and revealed by pointing at cells with a yellow corner marker.