



GOOGLE DOCS

Google Docs allows you to create and share your work online using free software that operates much like Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Here are some features:

- Create, edit and upload quickly. Import your existing documents, spreadsheets and presentations, or create new ones from scratch.
- **Access and edit from anywhere.** All you need is a Web browser. Your documents are stored securely online.
- Share changes in real time. **Invite people to view your documents** and make changes together, at the same time.

1. Creating an account

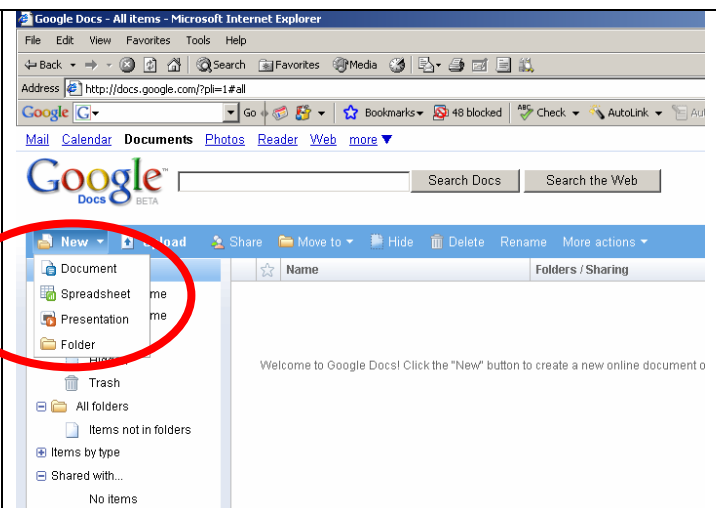
Visit <http://docs.google.com/> . Click on "Get Started." Enter the required information.

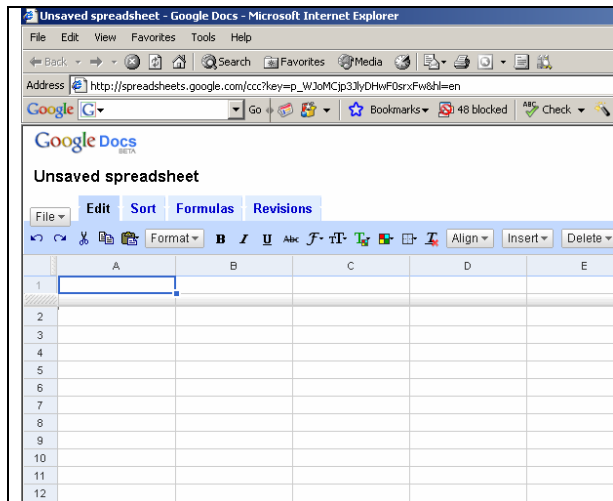
2. Getting started

At the <http://docs.google.com/> page, enter the email address and password from your newly created account.

3. Creating a new document

From the New menu, choose a document type. The 3 document types offered correspond closely to MS Word, MS Excel, and MS PowerPoint.

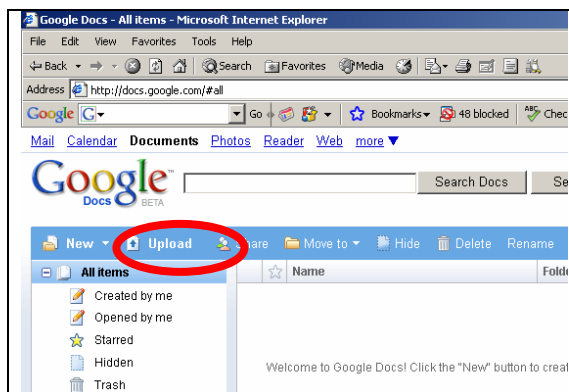




Here is an example of one of the document types offered, a spreadsheet.

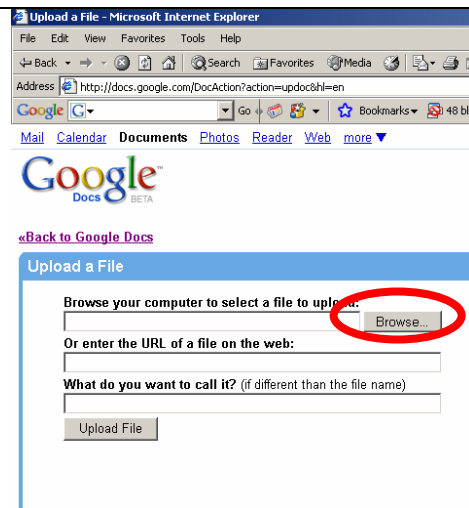
As you begin typing, the document will **automatically save** every few seconds, and will name itself as the first few words you type into the document. You can choose to rename the document by going to File and Rename.

4. Uploading an existing document



From your Docs main page, choose Upload.

Then browse your computer for the file you want to upload, and then upload the file. NOTE: Some formatting may be lost in the upload. Google Docs has many of the features of other software packages, but not all.



File sizes are limited as follows, with a combined limit of 5000 total in number of all types of documents:

Types of files that you can upload:

Documents (up to 500KB)

- HTML files and plain text (.txt).
- Microsoft Word (.doc), Rich Text (.rtf), OpenDocument Text (.odt) and StarOffice (.sxw).

Presentations (up to 10MB from your computer, 2MB from the web, 500KB via email)

- Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt, .pps).

Spreadsheets (up to 1MB)

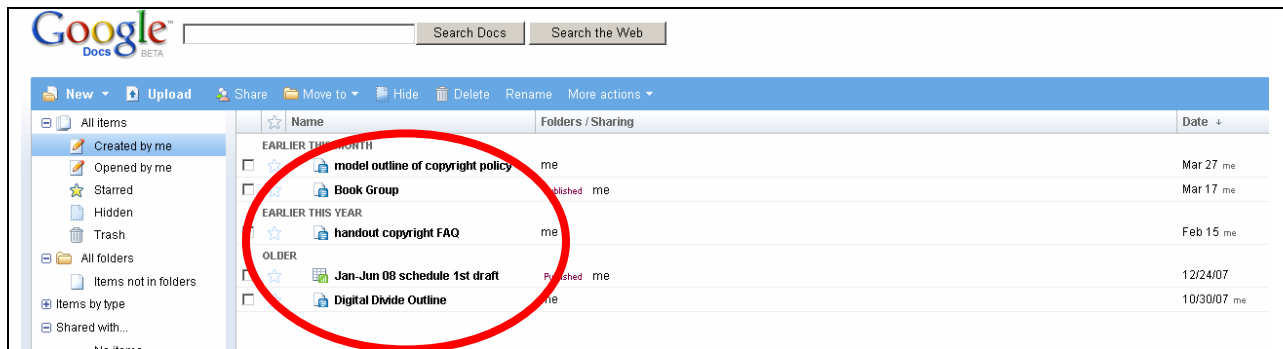
- Comma Separated Value (.csv).
- Microsoft Excel (.xls) files and OpenDocument Spreadsheet (.ods).

5. Downloading

Documents can be readily downloaded to a local drive by going to the File menu in Google Docs and choosing the Export or the Download option.

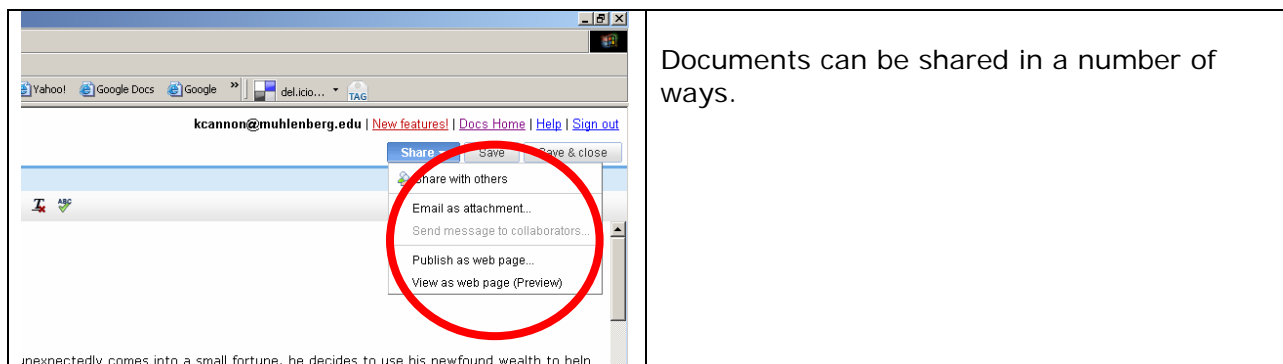
6. Managing documents

Here is a view of some sample documents in a Google Docs account:



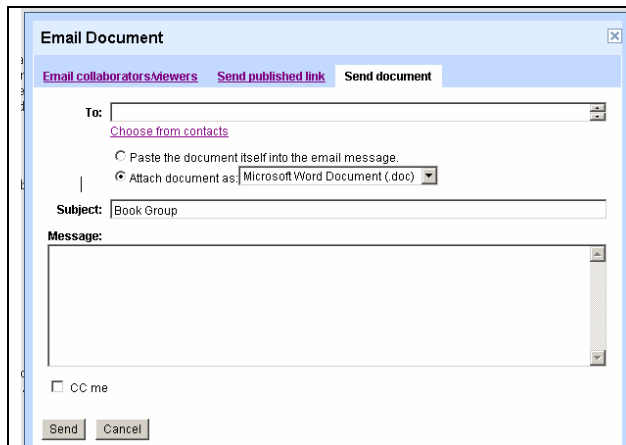
Documents are arranged by **date of last modification**. Documents can be moved to folders you have created. They can also be deleted to the trash, where they are stored indefinitely until the trash is emptied.

7. Sharing documents



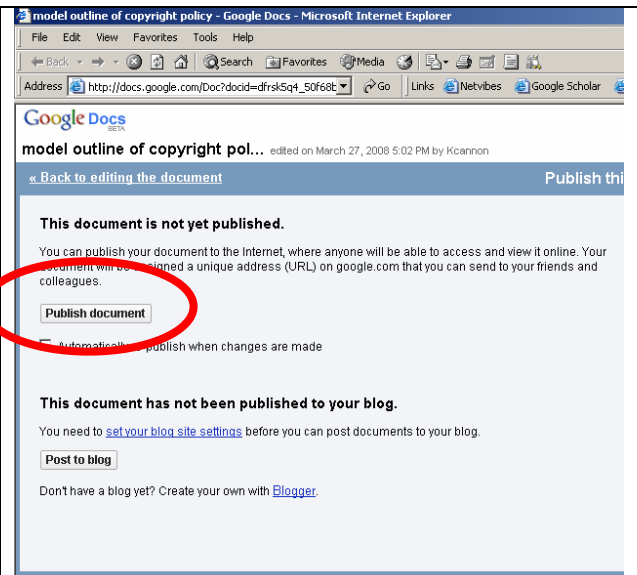
Documents can be shared in a number of ways.

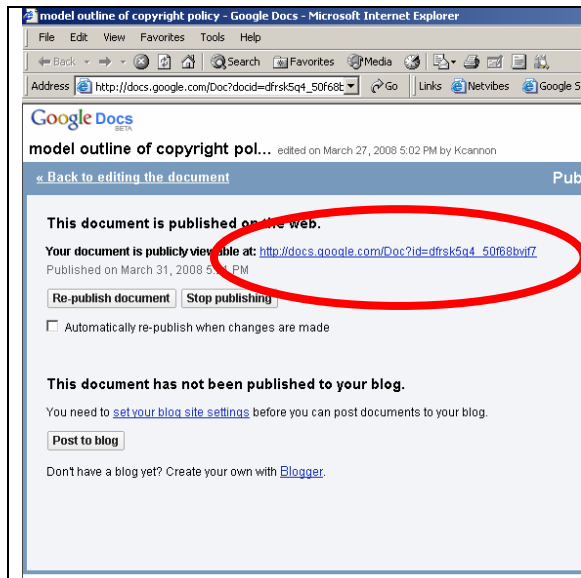
One is the **share with others** option that allows specified email recipients to view the document and even to make changes to the document. Recipients receive a URL in their mailbox that allows them to open the document without a password and make changes. The changes are saved in real time, and the recipient is shown as a collaborator in the Google Docs account. The recipient only has access to the specified document.



Yet another option—sending the document out as an **email attachment**. In this case, multiple copies of the document are dispersed, as opposed to recipients working from a single copy.

Finally, you can share by **publishing** the document: that is, creating a URL that is associated with the document. This URL can then be posted on another website such as Blackboard, or shared through email with as many people as you like. In this case, no one needs to be specified in advance as a recipient or collaborator. The document can be updated anytime after publication, keeping information current that is associated with the URL.





Here is a URL assigned to a published document. NOTE: I have seen no evidence that Google Docs can be tracked in the Google search engine.

8. Downsides

Cumbersomeness

Google Docs will seem cumbersome compared to standard office software like that made my Microsoft. Remember that Google Docs is freeware, and will feel like it. For example, editing cells in Google Docs' Spreadsheet package can feel like you're moving in slow motion, because all the work you're doing is online, stored on a remote server. As for the Documents package, it lacks some of the high-end editing capabilities of MS Word.

If you are presenting at a conference, it would be wise to download the files to the local PC in advance for increased speed and flexibility.

Backups

While I have never had a problem with being able to retrieve files, it is prudent to periodically save backup files on a local drive of documents from your Google Docs account.