Google Docs for Beginners

QUICK OVERVIEW: WHAT IS GOOGLE DOCS?

Google Docs is a free, online cloud-based word processing application, accessible through your Gmail account.
This program allows you to compose, edit, save, and export text-based files.

Google Docs is a web application, and is accessed by navigating to **docs.google.com**
It is also available for mobile Android and IOS devices.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN GOOGLE DOCS?

Google Docs is the free Google equivalent of Microsoft Word. It is **used to compose and edit text-based documents.**

You have the capability to:
- Build a document from scratch (more common)
- Utilize built in templates, which structure and theme much of the document for you (you would then fill in the blanks)

Google Docs doesn't offer as many formatting tools and options as Microsoft Word, but it is more than sufficient for your basic document creation needs!

WHAT DOES CLOUD-BASED MEAN?

When you hear "the cloud" simply think: "online storage."
And really, there is no singular "cloud" but many cloud services. Technology companies will build and manage the computing services to allow user data to be stored in their systems and accessed online.

Google Docs is integrated with Google Drive, which is Google's free cloud service. As you work, your **files are saved in Google's servers online**, as opposed to on the internal storage of the device you are using. This means you can access any of the documents you compose in Google Docs from **any device with an internet connection** by simply logging in.

The documents you make in Google Docs can be accessed via Google Drive or Google Docs.

WHAT SKILLS YOU WILL NEED TO UTILIZE GOOGLE DOCS

To compose most documents for personal and professional use, you will need to know how to:
- Access the Google Docs webpage
- Start a new document and retrieve in-progress documents
- Insert and erase text as needed (including cut, copy and paste)
- Utilize line breaks and appropriate spacing (such as tab)
- Format text (adjust font and size)
- Utilize text alignment options
- Initiate a spelling and grammar check and make appropriate corrections.

USER INTERFACE IN GOOGLE DOCS: GETTING STARTED

To get started using Google Docs, **you must first log in** with your Google Account.

The Google Docs home screen typically displays a set of tiles displaying recently opened documents. If you need to edit one of these existing documents, you'll simply click to open them.

To begin with a blank document, you will need to click the circular plus button in the lower right-hand corner of your browser window.

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If you are familiar with Microsoft Word, you'll likely feel very comfortable navigating the Google Docs user interface. All inputted text is displayed in the white document space, with various tools and options in the top toolbar.

Most options you use frequently can be accessed from the icon toolbar. These options allow you to easily format your text and paragraphs. Expanded document options are broken up into menus above this toolbar.

Your **document title** is displayed in the top left. You have the option to click that default text and input your document name.

Clicking on the **Docs logo** in the top left will take you back to the Google Docs homepage.

The star will mark your document and will move it to the "**Starred**" folder of your Google Drive, and selecting the **folder** allows you to organize where you would like the document placed within Google Drive.

Your **edit history/save status** will appear above the toolbar in grey, underlined text.
Hover over this text to see a more detailed view.
There is no save button in Google Docs because all of your work is **saved automatically** as you go.

THE CURSOR
When using a computer, the cursor appears where text can be inputted. When you open Google Docs, you should see a **blinking cursor** in the white space of the screen, indicating where your text will appear.

You may need to move the cursor to make changes and edit your document. You can do so by **using your mouse to click between letters, words, and paragraphs**. You also have the option to move the cursor by using the directional arrows on the keyboard.

USING THE KEYBOARD TO FORMAT TEXT
The default font in Google Docs is Arial size 11.
As you type, the text will appear at the top of the page and will align to the **left-hand side**.
Note that there are automatically **1-inch margins** (white space) around the entire document.

Space bar: to insert a single space between words.
Tab: inserts a total of 8 spaces (used to start a paragraph)
Shift: Hold shift while typing a letter to capitalize it.
Caps lock: will capitalize ALL text while activated.*
Enter: inserts a blank line between text (line break)
Backspace: erases text behind the cursor
Delete key: erases text after the cursor
Directional Arrows: to move the cursor around letters (left, right, up or down)

CUT, COPY, AND PASTE
The option to cut/copy and paste text is a vital skill that is useful for general computer use in addition to writing documents.

When in a word processing application, **cut** will remove the text selected and will store it on the clipboard until it is pasted elsewhere, or until something else it cut/copied.
Copy will copy the text selected and will store in on the clipboard until it is pasted elsewhere, or until something else is cut/copied.

Paste will insert the last cut/copied material where you selected.

TEXT FORMATTING

You have the option to apply formatting to text before it is typed or after it has been typed. There are preset text styles that you can choose from, or you can choose to format your text piece by piece.

Fonts:

To access the available fonts, click the **arrow** on the drop-down box. Click on the scroll bar on the right to scroll up and down.

Fonts are first displayed by recently selected, then are listed **alphabetically** to make it easy to locate the one you would like.

The **name of the font is displayed using that font**, so you'll have an idea of what it will look like when applied.

Font size:

To change your font size, **click the arrow** beside the block with the current font size displayed.

You can use your **mouse to select** the size, or you can type a custom number.

Font weight and style:

Options to make your text bold, italicized, and underlined are also in the icon toolbar.

Click on the icon to toggle the selection (click to turn on, click to turn off).

Note that your selection will stay on unless you turn it off!

You can tell if you have one of these formatting options applied because the **box will be highlighted** in blue.

Font colors:

Adding color can have both stylistic and functional value.

To **change the font color**, click the A icon with the colored block beneath it. That block will be the same color as your current selection.

To **apply a highlight** to the text, you'll need to click the marker icon and select your highlight color.

Preset styles:

To apply a style to text in Google Docs, click on the arrow beside the block that says, "Normal Text," then click your mouse to make your selection. These options are helpful for **inserting a large title or heading**.

Note that when you press the **enter key, the text will return to the normal** text formatting.

All of these options can be applied before or after text is typed.

To **change text that is already on the page, you'll need to highlight it with your mouse**.

Click and drag with your mouse to select text. You will see affected text highlighted in blue. Let go of your mouse to complete your selection, then apply formatting changes as desired.

BULLETS AND NUMBERS

Options to make a bulleted or numbered list can be found in the toolbar. Note that if your window is not maximized, these icons may be cut off from view.
Click on the icon to toggle the selection (click to turn on, click to turn off).

You can tell if you have one of these formatting options applied because the **box will be highlighted** in blue.

Press enter to start a new bullet or number. To make a new line but not a new bullet, press shift + enter.
To make a **nested item, press the tab key**. To unnest a bullet, press the enter key.

You will **need to deselect the icon** to end your list. Press the enter key first to start a new line, then deselect your choice.

HEADERS AND FOOTERS

The header and footer are regions at the top and bottom of your document. To add text, page numbers, or any other items, you must double click on the header or footer region of the page.

You can confirm that you can type in this section when you see the section outlined, a box that says either "header" or "footer,' and notice the blinking text cursor.

Note that you have the option to check a box to apply a **different header/footer to only the first page.** This may be applicable if you have a cover sheet for your document.

To exit the header/footer selection, click anywhere outside of that region.

PAGE NUMBERS

To utilize page numbers, navigate to the **Insert** menu above the icon toolbar.
Move your mouse over **page numbers** to expand the available options. Click your selection.

When you make your selection the header/footer (as applicable) will activate with your **page numbers displayed.** You have the option to format the style of the page numbers with font style, size and color by **highlighting your page number, then applying your changes**. The changes you make will apply across all pages.

You can also do these steps then press the backspace key to delete your page numbers.

TEXT ALIGNMENT

You have the option to align your text to the **left (default) or right margin, centered in the page, or justified (evenly spaced)** across all lines.

This can be applied to header, footer and body text.
Text alignment can be applied to a single line or block of text.

To change or modify your text alignment, highlight the text you wish to apply the change to and **select the appropriate icon from the icon toolbar**. The icons should look like a stack of lines mimicking the shape of a paragraph.
If you hover your mouse over any of the alignment options, it will display a description of each.
You also have the option to apply your alignment selection before you begin inputting your text.

This text formatting **applies even when you move to a new line**, so you may have to change alignment as you work with text in your document.

If you're unsure what alignment is currently active, l**ook or hover over the current text-align icon**. You can also **typically tell by the placement of the cursor**. If you have center align toggled, your cursor will appear in the center of the line.

CORRECTING SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

Your spelling will be checked as you compose your document. When a word is misspelled, a **squiggly red underline** appears beneath it.
To correct the word, **right click** it and choose the correct spelling from the corrections.

There is also the option to conduct these changes by clicking the ⌄ icon from the top toolbar. This will show all misspellings in the document and will allow you to apply changes via a dialogue box in the right corner of the screen.

Grammatical errors are indicated by a **squiggly blue underline**. This function is limited to what the program assumes you are trying to say, but will offer suggestions for revision when you **right click** the text affected.
Google Docs tends to ignore incomplete sentences and words with improper letter-case.

Because both spelling and grammar checks are automated, you have the option to right click the affected text and choose **"ignore" or "add to dictionary."** You may wish to choose this option when a proper noun, such as your name, is marked as misspelled throughout a document.

The red and blue lines **will not display** when the document is printed.

EXPORTING YOUR DOCUMENTS

To export a Google Doc, navigate to the **file** menu. File should appear directly beneath your document title.

Move your mouse over the option that says **Download.** Then, move your mouse over and choose your desired file format. In most cases, you will want to download you file as a Microsoft Word document format (**.docx**) and this is the choice at the very top of the list!

If you are downloading a document where the formatting and appearance of the text is vital, like a resume, you may desire to export your document as **PDF**. You may also desire a PDF if you do not want the recipient to alter your text easily (such as a contract or lease).

BASIC DOCUMENT UPLOAD TO WEBPAGE

When you complete your document, you may need to attach it to an online form or application. To do this, you will need to download a copy of your document to the device you are using, and upload it to your form or email.

If you have to upload your document to a form on a webpage, look for a button that says something like, **"Browse" or "Upload."** This button should prompt a pop-up of what we call the file explorer, which is just your internal view of the folders and files that are saved to the internal storage on the device that you are using.

You will **need to know where the item was saved in your computers directory to be able to retrieve it.** Most devices by default will take all downloaded files from the web browser and put them in a folder titled, **"Downloads" within "My Computer."**
Library devices don't have a lot of folders to sift through, however, you will need to double click on Computer, then the D:// Drive to retrieve your file.

Double click to navigate through various folders on your device, and **click your document to select it**. Once it is selected, you should see the file name populate in the field that says, "File Name." With that step completed, you can **click the button that says, "Open."**

Usually there is one final step to complete your document upload on the webpage, such as clicking a button that says, "Upload" or "Next." Pay attention to prompts on the screen to help you understand what to do to continue.

BASIC DOCUMENT UPLOAD TO EMAIL
Navigate to the **file** menu, then click on the option that says, "**Email as Attachment**."
You will be prompted to essentially build an email right inside of Google Docs. The email will be sent from the Gmail address that you are currently logged in as.

First, **choose the file format** you wish your document to be sent as. You can click the arrow beside the option shown to see all available types. The default value is **.PDF**.

The **To** field is mandatory. You must designate who you want the document sent to. **Input their full email address** here.

Be sure to fill in the **Subject** field with an appropriate subject so your recipient knows what to expect in the email inside.

The message field is where you can **type out the body text of your email**. It's always good practice to open an email like a letter and to sign it off with a thanks!

You have the option to send a copy to yourself as well. To do so, **check the box** at the bottom of the form.

When all the above steps are completed, **click on the blue send button** at the bottom.

TROUBLESHOOTING
If you have difficulty locating your document: ensure that you are in the correct Google account. Otherwise, try to utilize the search function to locate text from within your saved documents.

I pasted text from the internet and it looks weird!
When you utilize cut/copy and paste, typically the formatting of the text will transfer to the document. This means that font color, background color, font style and font size may all apply to the pasted text.
To remedy this, try highlighting the affected text and selecting the "Clear Formatting" button located on the far right of the icon toolbar. It looks like a T that has been crossed out.