

A Quick Guide to Google Docs for Teachers

by Ross Bentley-Davies

Why Use Google Docs

Because the documents are handled by a web-based application and all the data is held on the web it is designed to allow collaboration on a single document by a large number of users. Think of it as a big flip-chart pad where everyone has a marker pen and an eraser. Using an electronic editor like Google docs allows pictures to be added, useful information to be copied and pasted from websites and other documents as well as text to be typed in and edited. The editors of the document don't even need to be in the same room or logged in at the same time, so it has possibilities as a homework tool too.

There are other alternative systems on the internet that permit the same sort of collaborative editing and these are worth looking into as well. One of the key advantages of Google docs over tools like SimpleNote and DropBox is that it doesn't require anything to be installed locally, it runs entirely inside the browser so it can be run on any machine, even a simple netbook.

Once the collaborative project is complete, the document can be downloaded from Google docs in a range of different formats so that it can be printed, emailed or shared on the school network.

Using Google Docs

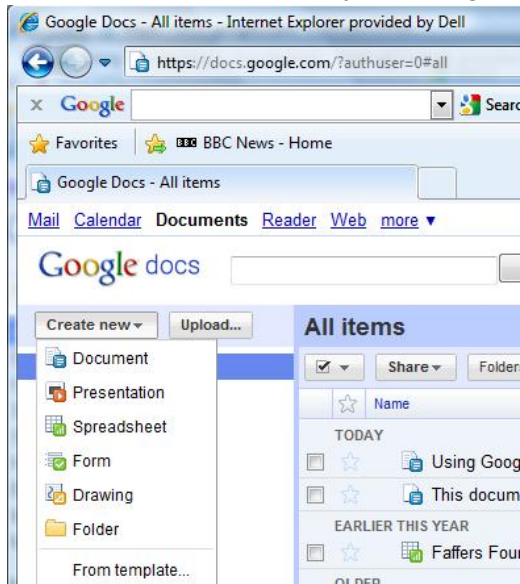
First of all you need to create yourself an account.

Go to <http://docs.google.com> and click on the link to create an account. You will need a valid email address where a confirmation link will be sent.

Once you have confirmed your account you can connect to <http://docs.google.com> and log in.

All your students will also need accounts on Google in order to share the documents. You may need to create these accounts for them.

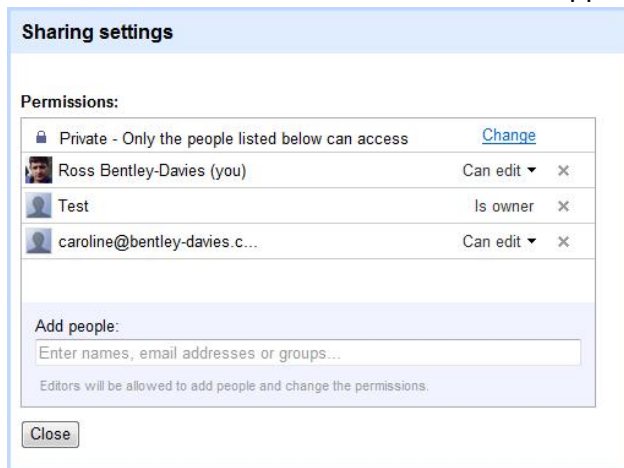
Create a new document by selecting Create New/Document



There is then a Share button in the top right hand corner.



Click Share and then enter the email addresses for each of the students that you want to share the document with. They should receive an email containing a link to the newly shared document and will also see the document appear on their main screen in Google docs.

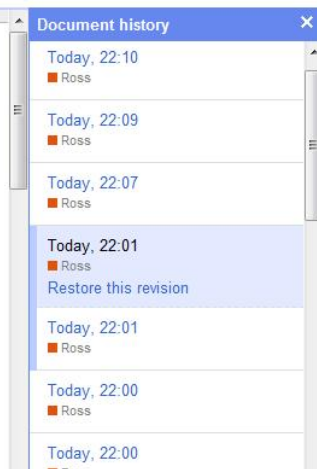


Multiple users can open and edit the document at the same time. Google docs frequently saves the changes as the users are typing so that other peoples changes will dynamically appear in the document as you are working.

Obviously this creates the opportunity for the document to get into a considerable mess if the editing is too enthusiastic. From the File menu you can select Revision History to see a number of snapshots of the document and you can use this to rescue work that has been lost by over-zealous edits.

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When you want to take a copy of the document to store in a safe place or to reuse as part of another project you can select Download As from the file menu and choose a file format for the document:

