

# 10 Google Docs

Almost every individual working in an office, businessmen, salespersons, executives or even writers need to create documents, spreadsheets and Power Point presentations with images for official or personal reasons. Earlier, these documents were being created and stored in the personal computer of the individual or the office computer and a backup of the documents had to be taken on a separate device that could also serve the purpose of carrying the files with you to another location, in case you needed to give a presentation elsewhere, or refer to the documents on the go. Of course, things became a little easier when laptops came into the picture, as they could be carried from one place to another quite easily. But, the risks of losing the entire data or file from the hard disk of the computer or even from a portable storage device could not be ignored.

There was also a problem with collaborating on and sharing the documents or files with other people or colleagues who were using different computers. Of course, one can share documents within a network but that is largely constrained by the physical location of the computers. Then there is also the issue of different word processors being used on different machines. For people who were geographically separated from one another, the only way to collaborate on or share documents was by sending them as attachments via e-mails. Thus, the documents could not be edited in real-time and caused delays in getting them ready. There is also a limitation in the e-mails, as large files cannot be sent as attachments.

With the advancements in Internet technology and the emergence of wireless connectivity, a lot of things changed, along with the way people could access the Internet very easily from anywhere and everywhere using their mobile phones or laptops. It was these developments that caused Google to come out with **Google Docs** also known as **Google Documents**, which is a free web based office suite that could be used by anyone from anywhere, if they had an Internet connection. Google Docs allows its users to create, edit and save documents both online and even offline, as well as share and collaborate work with others in real time.

Google Docs can be accessed from the top navigation bar of the Google home page or at <https://docs.google.com/>

## 10.1 Benefits of Working with Google Docs

- Google Docs provides you with the office editor and the office suite, which means that you can easily create any type of document online like; Word document, Power Point presentation, Excel spreadsheets or even images. Once you have created the document, you can also share and collaborate them with others and allow them to edit it in real-time as well.
- If you have created certain files or documents on your desktop computer, they can easily be uploaded to Google Docs using the Internet. This serves a very handy way to store and keep a backup of all your important files in one place on the cloud, where it can be accessed from anywhere. What's more, with Google Docs you can also work in the offline mode, by simply installing its software on your computer, thereby making it easier for you to sync your documents.
- Working on web-based software also means that you can work across operating systems, whether it is a Windows PC, Mac or a Linux based OS. Therefore when you are collaborating with others, Google Docs eliminates the need to send files back and forth multiple times and everyone sees the document in the same format. Google Docs support various formats like DOC, DOCX, PDF, XLS, PPT, RTF and many more.

- Google Docs is a secure web application. Therefore, you can be sure that your data will not be accessible to anyone, unless you decide to share it. Since the data would be residing on Google servers, chances of it being lost are minimal. The data is constantly backed up to provide sufficient mitigation of risk in case of hardware issues. Google service are reliable and they offer a 99.99% uptime, therefore one does not have to worry about data availability. Not only that, the security of documents with respect to infection with viruses is also taken care of.
- You need to have a Google account for working with Google Docs. Registration is free and if you have a Google account, you can use that to access Docs. Google Docs offers 1GB of storage space for the free account, however please note that this limit is for documents not created with Google Docs and there is no limit for storage space for documents created within Google Docs.
- Another major advantage of using web-based software is that not only does the software meet your requirement now but also gets better with time. Unlike software installed on a PC, you do not need to keep updating or upgrading the software to get new advanced features. As soon as new features are added, they become available to all users.

## 10.2 What You Can Do With Google Docs

Google Docs help you to undertake almost all tasks offered by a machine hosted office suite. Currently the elements, which form part of the Google Docs suite are; **Documents, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Drawings** and **Forms**. These are the applications, which are more frequently used by average users and hence will cater for most number of people. The Figure 10.1 below shows the Google Docs Home page with the nav bar and various items displayed.



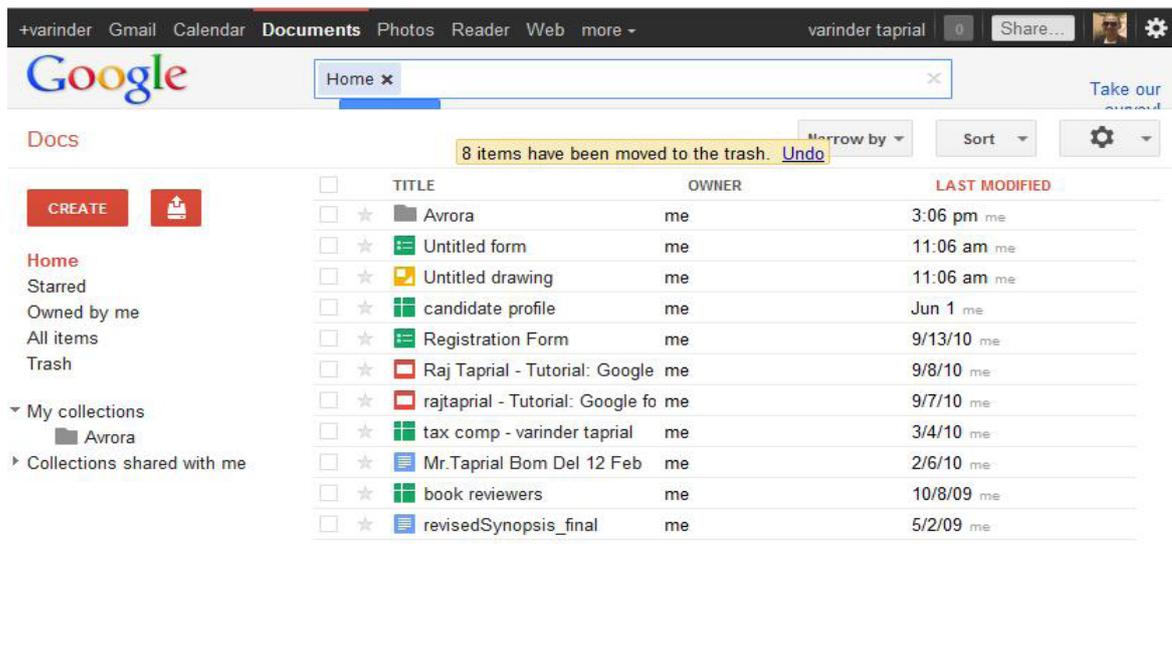


Figure 10.1 Google Docs Signed In Page

You can easily create documents from scratch or upload your existing files. All the basic tools for editing and formatting documents like bullets, adding tables, fonts etc are available for making compelling documents. The toolbar buttons are simple and familiar and hence the editing is quite easy.

Sharing your documents or collaborating with others in real time with Google Documents is a breeze. You can invite others as viewers or collaborators by simply entering their email addresses. Anyone you’ve invited to either view or edit your documents can access it as soon as they sign in. Multiple people can view or edit the documents simultaneously. At the time of writing, a document can be shared with up to 200 viewers and collaborators and up to 10 people can work on the document simultaneously. For spreadsheets a chat window is provided, which allows the collaborators to chat while viewing or editing the documents. The document revision history keeps a track of who edited what and when.

In addition, Google Docs has an auto save feature, which regularly saves your documents, and you do not have to worry about data loss due to power outage or hardware failure. You can also store and organize your documents in manageable collections within Google Docs, so it is easy to find and retrieve documents. “Collections” work on the same concept as the more conventional folders.

Google Docs allows you to publish documents as web pages with just a click. You can also control who has access to your document very easily. If required you can also publish the document directly to your blog.

Google has thousands of templates in the templates gallery that cater for almost any requirement, which you can use to create interesting content. This can potentially save you a lot of time and effort in designing and formatting your documents from scratch.

### 10.3 Elements of Google Docs

- **Documents**

The toolbar in Google Documents is simple to navigate and contains the familiar editing tools that are used to format the documents the way we want. In addition to the basic tools required for formatting and editing, there is a *translate option*, *comment option* as well as the *collaborate option* which allows you to either share the document with others or send it as an attachment with an email, all this without leaving the current window.

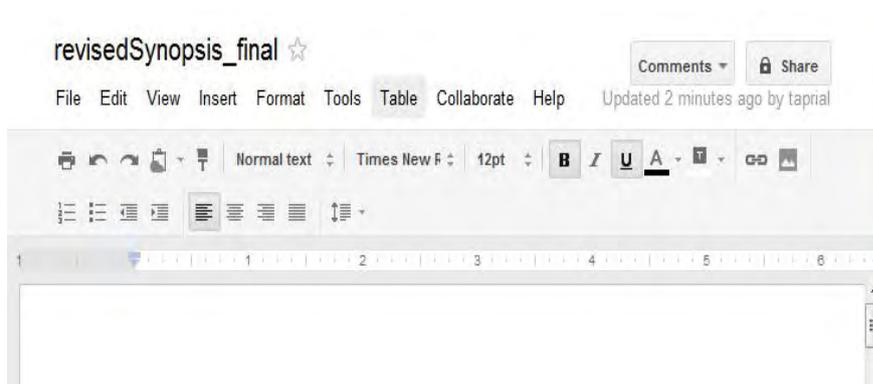


Figure 10.2 Google Docs Word Document Tool bar

The revision history is maintained and you can roll back to any version at any time. The documents provide conversion to and from Word, Open Office, PDF, RTE, HTML and TXT format.

- **Spreadsheets**

Just like the Documents toolbar, the spreadsheet toolbar is simple to use and contains familiar icons to make working easier.

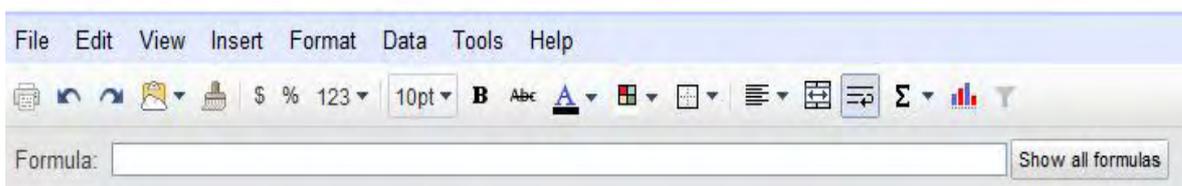


Figure 10.3 Google Docs Spreadsheets Tool Bar

With Spreadsheets you can import and convert the .xls, .csv, .txt and .ods formatted data and export to all these formats in addition to the HTML and PDF formats. You can insert / create charts, gadgets etc and also have the provision to embed the spreadsheet on your blog or website.

- **Forms**

With Google Docs you can easily create forms or surveys, send it to your friends and colleagues and keep track of responses in a single spreadsheet. The form can be created separately from the Docs list or in a Google spreadsheet. After you have completed making the form you can either email it to the prospective respondents or embed it in your blog / website. When the respondents fill out and submit the form, the response is automatically recorded. The responses received are assimilated in a spreadsheet and can be viewed either in entirety or as a summary. Forms are a very powerful tool and can be used by schools, businesses or by individuals for gathering feedback.

- **Google Drawings**

Google Drawings enable you to easily create, share and edit drawings online. The drawing can be a flow chart, a line diagram or a plain simple drawing. Besides the usual features of sharing and collaborating online with others in real time, a drawing created with Google drawings can be embedded into another Google document, spreadsheet or presentation and minor adjustments can be made inline, within the document.

- **Presentations**

The presentations support the .PPT and .PPS format and you can import or export your presentations in these formats. In addition, the presentations can be downloaded in the TXT format.

As with the other applications you can share, collaborate and view the presentations online with others and also embed the presentations in your blog or website.

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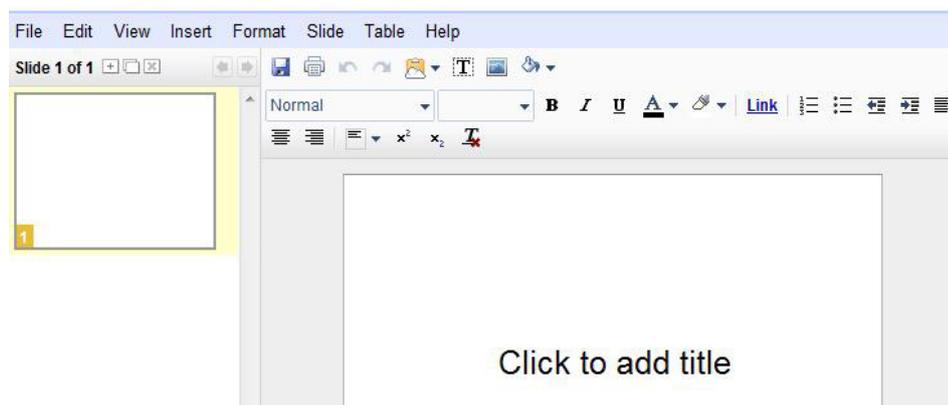



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**Figure10.4** Google Docs Power Point Presentations Tool Bar

## 10.4 Google Docs Viewer

Google Docs Viewer is another impressive and helpful application from Google. The Docs Viewer is integrated with Gmail and most of you must have noticed that when you get an attachment in Gmail you are given two options, View and Download. If you choose View, then you are shown the document in Google Docs Viewer.

The Docs Viewer supports 15 types of file formats which includes, besides the commonly used formats, Apple Pages (.PAGES), Adobe Illustrator (.AI), Adobe Photoshop (.PSD), Tagged Image File Format (.TIFF), Autodesk AutoCad (.DXF), Scalable Vector Graphics (.SVG), PostScript (.EPS, .PS), TrueType (.TTF), XML Paper Specification (.XPS) and Archive file types (.ZIP and .RAR).

So next time Windows tells you that it could not find a specific program to open a file type, you can try out Google Docs Viewer.