

3 Google Alerts

In the preceding chapters, we have seen how we can find information using the Google Search or keep ourselves updated with information and new content using the Google Reader. But there are times when a person may want to be informed or “*alerted*” about real time developments around the world with regards to a specific topic. It may be something as simple as monitoring a “developing news story” or getting the latest content on a specific celebrity, politician, medical issues or even keeping tabs on your competitor or industry etc. Or, maybe you would like to know what the world is saying about you, your product or your company. **Google Alerts** takes care of this requirement for you.

For example, if we wanted to know when and where our blog, Reading Café, is being mentioned on the web, maybe as news, in articles or in other blogs etc. then we would like Google to “alert” us to this information as soon as possible. For this, we would have to first “*create an alert*” with the appropriate keywords so that Google can keep a lookout for those search terms appearing anywhere on the web and then send these alerts to us via e-mails. In this manner, one can be alerted to any new mentions with regard to the specific topic or keyword on the web.

3.1 Creating an Alert

Google Alerts is available at <http://www.google.com/alerts> or alternatively you can visit the Google home page and click on “*more*” from the top navigation and then click on “*even more*”. The top product under Search on the *More Google Products* page is **Alerts**. The **Google Alerts homepage** is shown in figure 3.1 below.



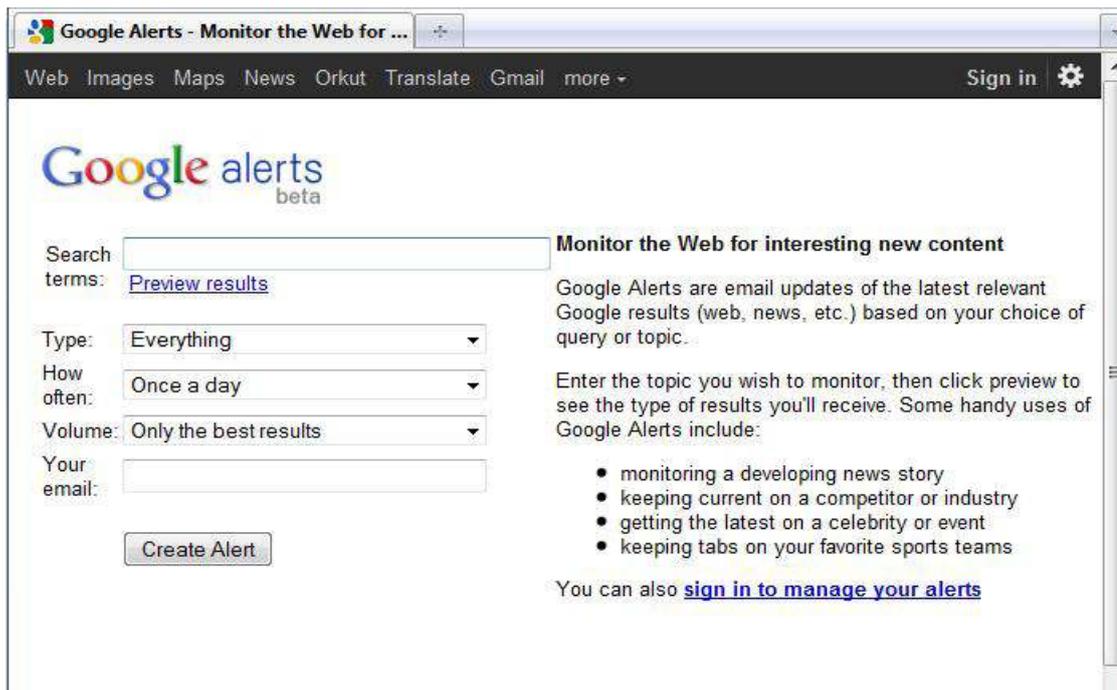


Figure 3.1 Google Alerts Home Page

The Google Alerts query form is pretty simple to fill. Fill in the search terms in the first box; the search terms are basically your query or keywords that you want to monitor content about. The keywords would be similar to what you would otherwise use for searching the web.

You can also select the *type of content* you want to monitor from the available options, i.e. *Everything* (default), *News*, *Blogs*, *Real-time*, *Videos* and *Discussions*. The frequency for receiving the alerts can be specified as per your requirement. It could be either, *Once a day* (default), *As it happens* or *Once a week*.

Select the *volume of content* you want to be notified about as *All results* or *Best results*. The choice will depend on the topic that your trying to follow, if you query is generic or something very common, expect to find many results everyday and you might like to restrict the alerts to *best results* only. However, if the query is something uncommon, like your own name provided you are not famous, you can choose *all results*.

An email id needs to be provided before you can **create the alert**. If you are already logged in, your alert will be created immediately without any verification. However, if you are not logged in then a verification email will be sent to the email address specified and your alert will be created only after you have verified the alert by clicking on the *verify* link in the email. This is done to prevent spam and creation of junk alerts by automated means. Once you have verified the alert, your alert becomes active and you will receive an email as and when Google finds something new about your query or as per the frequency you may have specified in the form.

A user can have up to 1000 Alerts at any given time.

When you are signed in, the **Google Alerts homepage** looks like the figure 3.2 below.

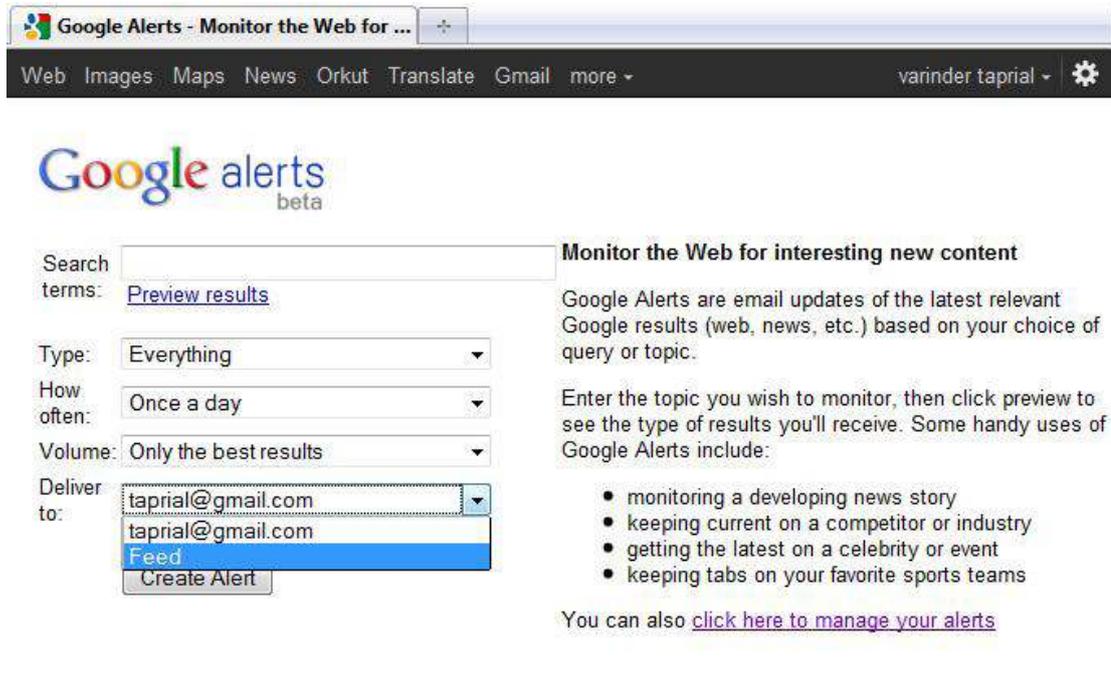


Figure 3.2 Google Alerts Home Page as Seen when Signed In

You can see here that it is the same form as you had seen earlier. The only difference is that the last box *Your Email* has been replaced by a *Deliver to* and the options available include your email id and feed. If you choose feed, the feed can be read by any RSS feed reader or Google’s very own Google Reader. Rest of the process remains the same. You can manage your alerts easily anytime by visiting Google Alerts home page. The link “**Click here to manage your alerts**” displays all the alerts created by you as shown in figure 3.3 below.

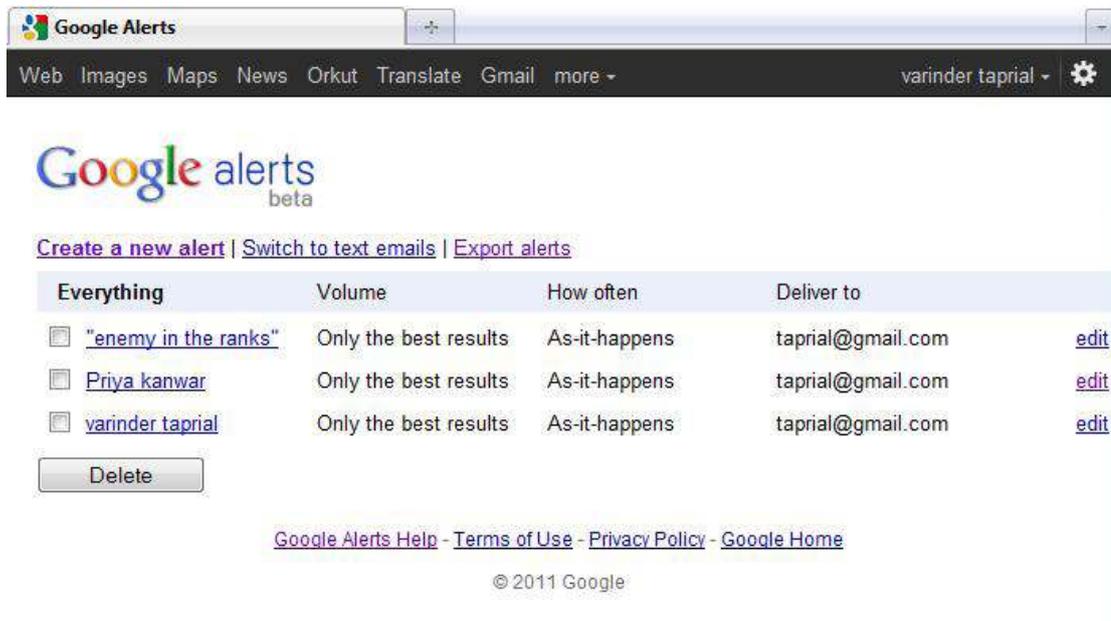


Figure 3.3 Manage Your Alerts

On this page you can manage your existing alerts i.e. edit the alert or maybe delete it when you no longer need it. The delete option is also available at the end of each email you receive regarding the alert. You can also **create a new alert** from this page itself.

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Google Alerts gives you the option to switch between HTML emails and text emails except in the case of *video alerts*, which require you to receive emails in the HTML format. You can also export your alerts in a csv format for later use, or for setting up the same alerts under a different account.

Use **Google Alerts** and never miss an update about your favourite topic.