

Letters to the Next President

1: Introducing Your Students to Google Docs

Prerequisites

- Each student must have an email address (any email address; Gmail accounts will work but are not required)

Overview

In introducing your students to the Letters to the Next President project, you should consider familiarizing them with the basic features of Google Docs. Students should be able to sign in to Google Docs and understand how to edit and share their documents with others in Google Docs. The instructions below explain how your students can create Google Accounts and access Google Docs for the first time. It also walks you through a possible activity to get your students acquainted with Google Docs. **(If your students are already familiar with Google Docs, you can skip this guide and move on to Guide 2: Before the Project - Setting Up Documents for Each Student.)**

Step 1: Each student sets up a Google Account to access Google Docs

Note: If your school or school district has implemented Google Apps Education Edition, your site administrator should create an account for each student. You can then skip the steps below for creating a Google account for each student. (Check with your school and/or district's information systems department to find out if you have access to Google Apps Education Edition.)

A Google Account gives you access to products like Google Docs. Google Accounts are associated with any email address. For example, a student could use a Yahoo! or Hotmail email address to create a Google Account. Gmail accounts already are Google Accounts.

- Direct your students to create a Google Account at <http://www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount>
- Instruct them to use their current email address to create a Google Account. If they do not have a current email address, ask them to create a Gmail account by visiting <http://mail.google.com/mail/signup>
- Follow instructions on the account creation page. For additional help, refer to the Help Center at <http://www.google.com/support/accounts>
- They'll know they've successfully created Google Accounts if after they've verified their email addresses they've reached the Google Accounts homepage.

Step 2: Introduce students to Google Docs for the first time

- Ask your students to go directly to Google Docs by visiting <http://docs.google.com> and have each sign in using her or his email address and password.

b Required information for Google account

Your current email address:
e.g. myname@example.com. This will be used to sign-in to your account.

Choose a password: Password strength: **Fair**
Minimum of 8 characters in length.

Re-enter password:

Remember me on this computer.

Creating a Google Account will enable Web History. Web History is a feature that will provide you with a more personalized experience on Google that includes more relevant search results and recommendations. [Learn More](#)

Enable Web History.

c Terms of Service: Please check the Google Account information you've entered above (feel free to change anything you like), and review the Terms of Service below.

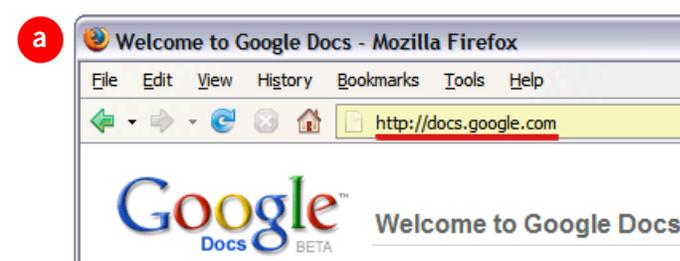
[Printable Version](#)

Google Terms of Service

Welcome to Google!

1. Your relationship with Google

By clicking on 'I accept' below you are agreeing to the [Terms of Service](#) above and the [Privacy Policy](#).



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Step 3: Walk your students through the basic features of Google Docs

We recommend that you familiarize your students with features of Google Docs using a practice activity prior to asking them to write their Letters to the Next President pieces. **Note: When composing their actual pieces, students are required to use a copy of the project submission template; learn more about the template in Guides 2 and 3)** A practice assignment is a great way to get students acclimated to the process of online editing and collaboration. Students should understand the following features of Google Docs:

- a Create a new document: Click **New>Document**
- b Name a document: Click **File>Rename** to name your new document. A pop-up window will prompt students to enter a title. (Tip: Use file naming conventions to help you and your students stay organized! (Ex: Period X: LASTNAME, FIRSTNAME: Project Name)
- c Save the document: Click the **Save** button in the upper right corner. Google Docs will also automatically save periodically, eliminating the need for students to manually save their work. (Note: if a student attempts to leave Google Docs for whatever reason and their most recent work has not been saved, the student will be prompted to save at that time.) Once you've saved a document, it appears in your Docs List anytime you sign in to Google Docs.
- d Edit a document: Click the white space below the toolbar and enter your content. Google Docs provides word processing functionality such as the ability to manipulate font (size, type, color), add bullets and numbering, and use spell-check.
- e Share a document: Sharing documents involves asking students to invite other students or teachers to have access to their work.

Collaborators are able to compose and revise in the student's document just as the student would. This permission is perfect for group projects, group writing, peer feedback/revision, and teacher-student communications. For the Letters to the Next President project, this option would allow students to work together to read and revise each other's persuasive pieces. Also, it would allow teachers to leave direct feedback to students on their documents.

To share a document, click **Share > Share with others**. Enter the email address of the person(s) you'd like to share the document with. Then click **Invite Collaborators**. A pop-up window will appear, asking you if you'd like to send an email notification. This is optional. Even if you don't send the email, that person will still have access to the document in their Docs List once they log into Google Docs.

The image contains five numbered screenshots (a-e) illustrating the basic features of Google Docs:

- a** A screenshot of the Google Docs toolbar showing the 'New' dropdown menu with 'Document' selected.
- b** A screenshot of the Google Docs interface showing a pop-up dialog box titled 'Enter new document name:' with a text input field and 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.
- c** A screenshot of the Google Docs toolbar showing the 'Share' and 'Save' buttons.
- d** A screenshot of the Google Docs interface showing the 'Share with others' dialog box with the 'Share with others' option selected.
- e** A screenshot of the Google Docs interface showing the 'Invite people' dialog box with the 'as collaborators' radio button selected and an email address input field.

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f Add a comment: There are two ways to leave feedback on another author's document once the document has been shared:

Insert a comment: Select a place in your document to leave a comment. Then click **Insert>Comment**. Students (and teachers!) can leave a comment anywhere on the document. The comment will include the commenter's username and a time/date stamp.

Insert text in a different color: To show that a different user is typing, collaborators can use different text colors to indicate authorship. To do this, a collaborator can simply type anywhere in the document. Then highlight the text and click on the capital 'A' in the middle of the toolbar to choose any of the colors that drop down. All of the selected text will change to the new color.

g Publish a document: Publishing a document generates a public web address (URL) that you can send to friends and family. Anyone with access to this web address can view your document. This publishing step is required for letters that will appear on the Letters to the Next President website. Go to **Share > Publish as a webpage** to publish a document.

Introductory Assignment

To get students started in Google Docs, a simple, introductory assignment might be the following:

"Write a one-paragraph explanation of the difference between Google Docs and either writing on paper or using a different word processor. Be sure to consider the following: access, convenience, collaboration, communication, and simplicity. You will be writing your explanation in a Google Doc document, and will have to take the following steps:

1. CREATE a new document
2. SAVE that document using the following naming convention (Class period, LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, My first document)
3. WRITE your explanation in the document
4. SHARE your document with two people (a teacher and another student in class) by adding them as collaborators
5. COMMENT on one other student's explanation in his or her document, after you've been added as a collaborator
6. PUBLISH your document

Here's what you and your students will have accomplished:

1. Each student has a Google Account.
2. Each student has signed into Google Docs.
3. Each student is familiar with the editing, saving, sharing, commenting, and publishing features of Google Docs.

Questions? Email letters2president@nwp.org

