

Understanding and Using Google Docs

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Resources

- [Google Docs for Editors](#) by Karin Horler (Editorial Freelancers Association, 2018)
- [An Editor Makes Peace with Google Docs](#) by Erin Brenner
- [Accessibility for Docs editors](#)
- [Make your document or presentation more accessible](#)

General Tips

- If a Google Docs document seems to be slowing down, try the following:
 - Close the search box.
 - If you have multiple versions of a doc open (e.g. in different tabs), close those.
 - Resolve comments.
 - Resolve suggested edits.
 - Ask people to get out of the doc.
 - Close Chrome tabs that you don't need.
- Workarounds for lack of “show formatting” feature:
 - Use the [Show](#) add-on (then toggle marks off again).
 - Find the item (e.g., if you suspect an errant tab is present, do a find for \t with **Match using regular expressions** selected and tabs will be highlighted where present).
 - Download the document to Word just to view it there with formatting symbols.
- Shortcut to create a new file: type **docs.new** into your browser address bar.

Selected Google Docs Add-ons

- [Advanced Find & Replace](#)—supplements the search feature by allowing you to specify font, size, case, highlight, and other text attributes.
- [Consistency Checker](#)—looks at hyphenation, numerals vs. spelled-out numbers, spelling variations, common typos, and abbreviations; by the maker of PerfectIt.
- [Doc Builder](#)—allows you to save text snippets and insert them into your document.
- [DocTools](#)—toggles numbers and words; sorts text or table rows.
- [Endnote Generator](#)—converts footnotes to endnotes.
- [Highlight Tool](#)—allows you to highlight words or phrases with custom-labeled colors and then export them to a separate document by category—could be used to create or add to an editorial style sheet.
- [MathType](#)—inserts equations with more options than the built-in equation editor.
- [Search & Navigate](#)—like Navigation Pane in Word; finds and navigates to headings, bookmarks, images, tables, or instances of a word or phrase in a document.
- [Show](#)—displays paragraph marks, spaces, and tabs by replacing them with symbols (be sure to toggle off before your client sees the document).
- [Text Cleaner](#)—removes multiple spaces, tabs, and line breaks; smartens quotes; removes hyperlinks and underlining.

Selected Regular Expression Searches

\t	Finds a tab character
\v	Finds a manual line break or “soft return” (i.e., Shift+Enter)
\n	Finds a paragraph mark (i.e., Enter)
\d	Finds any single digit from 0 to 9
\D	Finds any character that is not a digit from 0 to 9
\s	Finds any white-space character (spaces, tabs, line breaks, paragraph marks)
\S	Finds any character that is not a white-space character
\b	Word boundary; for example, \badmit\b finds <i>admit</i> but not <i>admittance</i> or <i>readmit</i>
	Pipe character, indicates “or”; for example, cat dog finds <i>cat</i> or <i>dog</i>
\	Treats the following character as itself; for example, \[finds a bracket character, which would otherwise indicate the start of a range
[...]	Finds any character from a set or range; for example, [aeiou] finds any vowel, [a-f] finds any letter from <i>a</i> to <i>f</i> , and [1-5] finds any digit from 1 to 5

- In Google Docs, you can use regular expressions in the **Find** box but not in the **Replace with** box.
- For more regular expressions information, see [Search and use find and replace](#) and [Syntax for Regular Expressions](#).

Notable Updates in Google Docs¹

For the latest: [Learn what's new in Google Docs](#)

- **Insert section breaks**—can insert section breaks; have different page layout and margins for different sections, insert page numbers by section.
- **Headers and footers**—after inserting section breaks, can have different headers and footers in different sections or on even/odd pages; can change header/footer margins.
- **Page count**—can insert total page count.
- **Word count**—Tools > Word Count (also gives character count). Option to display word count while typing (for short documents).
- **Compare documents**—compare two Google Docs files, like Word’s Compare function. Differences are displayed as suggestions.
- **Change owner**—can change owner of a Google Docs file (note: you could then lose access).

¹ Since publication of [Google Docs for Editors](#) (Editorial Freelancers Association, 2018).

Scripting Resources

- [Extending Google Docs | Apps Script](#)
- [Quickstart: Translate Google Workspace Add-on](#)
- [Introduction To Google Apps Script | The Collins School of Data](#) (focuses on Sheets, but basic concepts apply)
- [Document Service | Apps Script](#)
- [Advanced Docs Service | Apps Script](#)

Selected System-Level Utilities

You can also use these system-level apps to improve your Google Docs editing experience:

- [TextExpander](#) or [PhraseExpress](#)—extended autocorrection and text expansion.
- [AutoHotkey](#) (on PC only)—scripting (like macros, but can run in all programs); for example, add standard comments. Also does autocorrection and text expansion.

[Using Autocorrects and Text Expanders for Efficient Editing](#) (Editors Canada webinar)—includes how to use these system-level items in Google Docs.

Google Docs and Security

Some articles that discuss the security of Google Docs and provide recommendations:

- [Is It Safe to Use Google Docs?](#)
- [Are your Google Docs secure? – TechTalks](#)
- [Keeping Your Files Safe in Google's Cloud](#)