Share Safely in Google Drive

Stephanie Obodda - 2016-02-09 - Comments (0) - Google Drive

Understand Google's Permission Model

When you create a document, it is by default Private, meaning only you are able to see it.

By clicking on the Share menu on the top right of a document, you can control who has access to your document (see the section about Sharing Folders below for an even better way to share).

Viewing vs. Editing

When sharing a document, you have the choice to assign viewing or editing privileges. Editors will be able to change the document. Only you, the owner, can delete the document. If you would like to assign ownership to someone else, you can do so in the sharing settings after you have shared with that person.

Be aware that editors can, by default, change the sharing settings of your document! If you would prefer that your collaborators edit, but not share, your document, note the sentence on the bottom of the Sharing Settings box. It says "Editors will be allowed to add people and change the permissions." You can click the"Change" link after this sentence to change this setting for the document.

Disable Downloads

Disabling download must be done on a per-file level (it can not be applied to a whole folder, for example). Here are Google's instructions for disabling download of a Drive file.

Overall document privacy - you can choose from the following options. However, unless you are sure that you require one of the other options, it is recommended that you leave your document as Private and just share with selected people.

- **Public on the web** - Anyone on the Internet can find and access. No sign-in required.
- **Anyone with the link** - Anyone who has the link can access. No sign-in required.
- **Brown University** - People at Brown University can find and access.
- **People at Brown University with the link** - People at Brown University who have the link can access.
- **Private** - Only people explicitly granted permission can access. Sign-in required.

More information about Google Documents permissions

Share Folders, not Documents

If it is likely that you will share documents in the future with the same group of people, it is best to create a folder and share it. All documents you put in that folder will be automatically shared with the same group of people.

- **Why?** Sharing individual documents is more time consuming and can lead to errors and inconsistencies. When sharing a folder, it is easier to keep track of who has access and give a new person the ability to access many files at once. Also, using a folder allows everyone in your group to add to that folder, creating an easy-to-find archive of group materials.

- **Why not?** If you only need to share one document, you may not need a folder.

- **How?** Instructions on Google Help Site:
  Creating a Folder
  Adding Docs to a Folder

Check Names

When sharing a document or folder, make sure you have the right person - there may be, for example, an undergraduate who has the same name as one of your co-workers. If you have ever accidentally emailed this other person, they may show up high on your list of suggestions when you type in the name. To avoid this, go to your contacts in your mail, and delete the wrong person from your contacts.

Be Careful with Confidential Data

You should never store social security or credit card numbers in a Google Doc! However, you may have somewhat confidential data in your document. If that is the case, it is good to double-check who that document is shared with.

How? If you want to check who is able to access your document, open the document, click the Share menu on the top right, and select "Sharing Settings". Whether your document is shared individually or via a folder, this will list the people who have been given access.

Share with a Group

Did you know that Google Groups can be used to assign permissions to documents? Especially in large departments, this can save a lot of time and ensure consistency. For more information about Google Group features and how to request one at Brown, see our Service Catalog entry for Google Groups.

Note that to share a folder with a group, you may have to send a notification (do not uncheck the notification checkbox) or the folder will not show up in the recipients' list of shared items.

Organization

Name Clearly

Be mindful of what you name folders and documents. People you share with will see the name, so you should be descriptive and professional in your naming. It might be helpful to include the name of the project or your department so it is easy for others to find.

Folders

We discussed Folders in the context of sharing, but even if you are not sharing documents, they are a helpful way to stay organized.

How?

Creating a Folder
Adding Docs to a Folder

Nested Folders

You can create folders inside folders. To do so, first click an existing folder to select it. Then, create a new folder. If you already have created the folder, you can move it into another folder after it is created.

Drag and Drop

For easy and quick organization, simply drag documents into a folder. Note that they will continue to appear individually on your list of documents, even if they are in a folder - this is normal.

Colors

You can add a color to a folder, making your documents from that folder stand out in a list. Right click the folder (control click on a Mac) to choose the color.

Search

Just like Google's mail search, the documents search is powerful and offers a lot of options. You can do a simple search by typing a search term into the search box at the top of your docs.

Advanced Search

To access the advanced Docs search, click the Advanced Search Options to the right of the search box above your list of documents. Then, type in one or more criteria.
Article: Search Your Mail and Google Drive by Size

Note that when typing in an email address, you should not choose an option from the list of names - just type the email address and click the Search button immediately afterward, otherwise you will not get any results. This is a bug and hopefully will be fixed soon.

Saved Searches

When you are viewing search results, you can save a search by clicking the Save This Search button in the bar on top of your search results. This allows you to easily view your search in the future without having to remember what you searched for. Your saved searches will show up on the left of your Docs home.