

Saving Your Searches with Google Notebook

Google Notebook is a web-based (or, alternately, a browser-based) tool that lets you create an online “notebook” to organize all your web-based research on a given topic. You clip text, images, and links from interesting pages you visit, storing them in a topic-specific notebook page. It’s a great way to organize typically chaotic web-based research activities.

Getting to Know Google Notebook

Google Notebook (www.google.com/notebook) is your personal notes page. As you can see in Figure 12.1, you create different notebooks for different topics; each notebook holds the notes you make, as well as links to and clips from web pages you select.

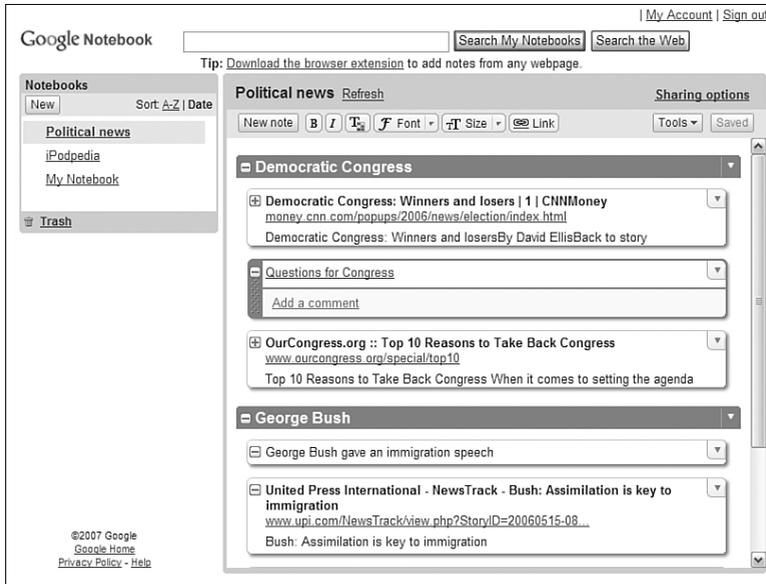


FIGURE 12.1

Organizing notes and web links in Google Notebook.

All your notebooks are listed in the Notebooks panel on the left side of the page. Click any notebook to display its contents in the main pane.

The contents of a notebook can be organized by section, or displayed independently. Notes are displayed either condensed or in full. To condense a note, click the - button in the top-left corner; to expand the note to display the full contents, click the + button. Notes can include text that you enter, text clipped from a web page, pictures clipped from a web page, or links to a web page. (Figure 12.2 shows a note with text, pictures, and a web page link.) To view a web page linked to from a note, just click the page's URL.

note To use Google Notebook, you have to sign in with your Google Account.

**FIGURE 12.2**

A note with text, pictures, and web links.

Adding Notebook Content

The key to getting the most out of Google Notebook is adding content to a notebook. You use notebooks to organize your notes—in the form of web page content, links, and your own hand-typed comments.

Creating a New Notebook

To create a new notebook, click the New button in the Notebooks panel. This opens a blank notebook with the name “Notebook 1.” Place your cursor in this text box, type a new name for your notebook, then click OK. Your new empty notebook now appears in the main section of the page, waiting for you to enter new notes.

Adding a New Section

One or two notes in a notebook are easy enough to navigate, but when you start adding a lot of notes, it gets a bit cumbersome to later find the information you want. For this reason, Google Notebook

tip To search your notebooks for specific content, enter one or more keywords into the top-of-page search box, and then click the Search My Notebooks button. All matching notes are then displayed as your search results.

lets you organize each notebook into multiple sections; think of a section as a file folder in a filing cabinet.

To create a new section in a notebook, click the Add Section link at the top of the notebook contents. This creates a section header, with the name Section 1, as shown in Figure 12.3. Enter a name for the new section, then click OK. Your new section is now added to the notebook; add as many sections as you like.



FIGURE 12.3

Adding a new section to a notebook.

Adding a New Note

To add a new note to a notebook, click the New Note button to display the Type Here section, shown in Figure 12.4. Position your cursor within this section and start typing; the section changes to a note box, like the one in Figure 12.5. You can enter as much text as you like; the note is complete when you stop. You can add more text to any note at any time by positioning your cursor within the note box and typing some more.



FIGURE 12.4

Getting ready to add a new note.

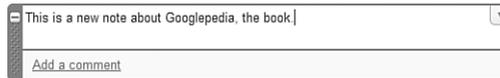


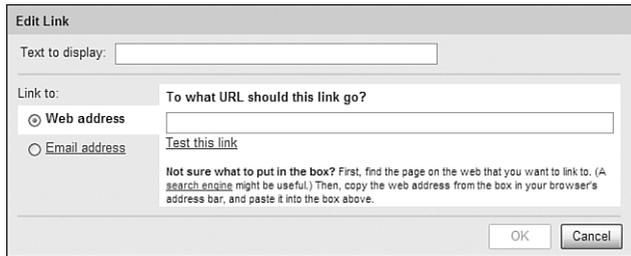
FIGURE 12.5

Entering new note text.

To format the text in a note, use the formatting controls at the top of the notebook pane. You can create bold, italic, or colored text; you can also change the font and the text size for selected text.

tip To insert additional comments below the main note text, click the Add a Comment link and start typing.

You can also insert web links into a note, by clicking the Link button. This displays the Edit Link box, as shown in Figure 12.6. Enter the text you want displayed for the link, then the link URL. Click OK when you are done.

**FIGURE 12.6**

Adding a web link to a note.

Clipping Content from Web Pages

Google Notebook really proves its worth when you clip web page content into individual notes. This is accomplished via the Google Notebook browser extension, which adds a Google Notebook button to either the Internet Explorer or Firefox web browsers.

Installing the Browser Extension

To install the browser extension into your web browser, click the Download the Browser Extension link at the top of the Google Notebook page. Follow the onscreen instructions to download and install the extension. Once installed, a Google Notebook button appears in your browser's status bar, as shown in Figure 12.7, as well as in a separate toolbar at the top of your browser.

**FIGURE 12.7**

The Google Notebook button in the Internet Explorer status bar.

Adding a Web Page as a Note

To use the Google Notebook browser extension, navigate to a web page that you want to save to your notebook. When

note The Google Notebook browser extension works with Internet Explorer 6 and 7 in Windows XP (not yet in Windows Vista), and with Firefox version 1.5+.

you click the Google Notebook button, you see a pop-up pane similar to the one shown in Figure 12.8. To add a link to this web page as a new note, click the New Note button and then click the Clip button. This creates a new note containing the title of the web page; the title is also a hyperlink to the page's URL. You can insert additional text under the page title, if you like.



FIGURE 12.8

Adding web page content to a note.

Clipping Content from a Web Page

You're not limited to adding web page links to your notes; you can also clip text and pictures from any web page into a note. To do this, click the Google Notebook button to display the editing pane. Now use your cursor to select the text or pictures you want to copy. Click the New Note button to create a new note, then click the Clip button. The selected content will now be pasted into the new note.

Managing Notebook Content

As with the contents of any physical notebook, you can manage the virtual contents of your Google Notebook. Here's how.

Managing Notebooks

You can manage content at both the note and the notebook level. We'll start with notebook management. Here are some of the most useful things you can do:

- To print all the notes in a given notebook, select the notebook, click the Tools button, then select Print.

- To rename a notebook, select the notebook, click the Tools button, then select Rename Notebook.
- To delete a notebook, select the notebook, click the Tools button, then select Delete Notebook.

Managing Notebook Sections

You can also manage the sections you create within a notebook. Here are some of the things you can do:

- To move a section up or down within a notebook, use your cursor to drag the section header from one position to another. (It helps if you first collapse all the sections in this notebook.)
- To print all the notes in a section, click the section header, click the Tools button, then select Print.
- To delete an entire section of a notebook, click the section header, click the Tools button, then select Delete Selected Section.
- To export the notes in this section to a Google Docs document, select the section header, click the Tools button, then select Export to Google Docs.

Managing Notes

Finally, you can manage individual notes within a section or notebook. Here's what you can do:

- To move a note into a different section within the same notebook, use your cursor to drag it from one position to another. (You can also click the down arrow on the note, select Move, and then select a different notebook or section.)
- To print a note, select the note, click the Tools button, then select Print.
- To delete a note, click the down arrow on the note and select Delete.
- To remove the page title and web link from a note, click the down arrow on the note and select Remove Title and URL.

Sharing Notes

Another nice feature of Google Notes is that you can use it as a collaboration tool. That is, you can share a notebook with other users, and let them add their own notes and comments.

To share a notebook, select the notebook and then click the Sharing Options link. When the Sharing Options page appears, as shown in Figure 12.9, enter the email addresses of those with whom you wish to share. When you click the Save Settings button, those users will receive email invitations to share the notebook, along with links to the notebook itself. (You have the opportunity to add a personal message to the invitation.)



FIGURE 12.9

Sharing a notebook with others.

By default, a shared notebook is a private document, accessible only by those you invite. If you wish instead to make your notebook a public web page, click the Publish This Notebook option. This expands the Sharing Options page to include a second invitation text box, along with the URL of the shared notebook page. When you make your notebook public, users you invite can view the notebook content, but not edit it. (Unless they've been separately invited to collaborate, of course.) Such a publicly shared notebook is shown in Figure 12.10; it looks a little like a blog.

The screenshot shows a Google Notebook interface. At the top left, it says "Political news" and "Last edited May 8, 2007". Below that is a link "More by Michael Miller »". The Google Notebook logo is in the top right. A sidebar on the left lists "Sections:" with links for "Democratic Congress" and "George Bush". The main content area has a header "Democratic Congress" and a sub-header "Democratic Congress: Winners and losers" by David Ellis, with a "Back to story" link. Below the text is a small image of an offshore oil rig. Navigation buttons for "BACK" and "NEXT" are shown, along with "1 of 6". The text discusses oil and gas, mentioning Exxon Mobil's profits and the American Stock Exchange Oil Index. Below this is a link to "OurCongress.org :: Top 10 Reasons to Take Back Congress" with a sub-link "www.ourcongress.org/special/top10". The text continues with "Top 10 Reasons to Take Back Congress" and a paragraph about Nancy Pelosi and Tom Delay. At the bottom, there is a link "Questions for Congress".

FIGURE 12.10

A Google Notebook made public.

The Bottom Line

Browsing the Web doesn't have to be haphazard and ephemeral. Google Notebook is a great way to organize the content you find on the Web and to create notebooks of information for future use—by you or your collaborators.