

Nancy Conner

Sams **Teach Yourself**

# Google Voice™

in **10**  
**Minutes**

**SAMS**



## **Sams Teach Yourself Google Voice in 10 Minutes**

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# Introduction

Welcome to Google Voice, your complete phone management system.

Google Voice lets you manage incoming calls—specifying where to send them (you can ring up to six phones for a single incoming call)—and make free calls in the United States and Canada (and very cheap international calls). But that’s just the beginning of this feature-rich system.

Google Voice has dozens of features, which is terrific if you’ve got serious phone requirements, but you shouldn’t let all of those features intimidate you if your needs are more limited. Google Voice provides you with a smorgasbord of choices, but you can start with the most popular and then dig into what else is available when you have time.

## What’s in This Book

This book gives you a guided tour of Google Voice, from setting up to making and receiving calls to using advanced features like call forwarding and custom voicemail greetings. You see what’s available in Google Voice so that you can make choices about what you want and need.

Google Voice offers you tons of options, which are all covered in this book:

- ▶ Making calls (for free in the U.S. and Canada)
- ▶ Getting voicemail alerts sent to your mobile phone
- ▶ Forwarding calls to up to six phones
- ▶ Reading transcripts of your voicemails
- ▶ Getting a free Google phone number
- ▶ Storing contact information
- ▶ Listening as people record voicemail for you
- ▶ Making inexpensive international calls

- ▶ Using one voicemail greeting for some people and a different greeting for others
- ▶ Screening calls by having Google Voice ask for the callers' names before passing the calls on to you
- ▶ Sending and receiving free text messages

And there's even more to learn as we drill down into more detailed topics (such as temporary call forwarding). All in all, you'll get the whole Google Voice story.

## What You'll Need

You don't need much to work with Google Voice—just a phone (which can be a mobile phone) and a computer that can connect to the Google Voice website. We'll go over system requirements in more detail in Lesson 1, “Welcome to Google Voice,” but Google Voice officially supports Windows XP, Windows Vista, Mac OS X, and Linux.

What's missing from that list? Windows 7. At this writing, Google Voice doesn't currently list Windows 7 as being officially supported by Google Voice. On the other hand, we've tested and all seems fine—we had no problems using Google Voice with Windows 7.

## Choose a Web Browser

To use Google Voice, you need a web browser—you can pick from one of these:

- ▶ IE6 and above
- ▶ Firefox 3 and above
- ▶ Safari 3 and above
- ▶ Google Chrome

### NOTE

Your browser needs to support Flash 8 (or later) to work with Google Voice.

## Get an Invitation

As of this writing there's one more thing you need to get started with Google Voice—an invitation from Google. Currently, you must be invited to join Google Voice—either by Google or by someone who already has a Google Voice account—to use the service. There's no official word yet about when Google Voice will be open to everyone.

We go through this in more detail and see how to request an invitation from Google Voice in Lesson 2, “Signing up and Getting Started,” which is all about actually signing up and signing in with Google Voice.

### TIP

Invitations that come directly from Google take a lot longer than invitations from people who already use Google Voice; the latter are immediate. So if you have a pal who uses Google Voice, see if you can get an invitation through him.

Of course at some point, Google will no longer require invitations to set up a Google Voice account. In fact, invitations may no longer be required by the time you read this. You see how to tell whether or not invitations are needed in Lesson 2.

## Conventions Used in This Book

In the step-by-step instructions in this book, anything you need to click, press, or type is in **bold** text, such as “Click the **Settings** link to open the Settings page.”

We've also included some special sidebars that call out information that is of special interest.

### NOTE

Notes include extra information that might give you a deeper understanding of a topic and that help you expand your knowledge.

**TIP**

Tips offer suggestions for getting things done more quickly or easily.

**CAUTION**

Cautions are warnings that alert you to possible consequences or an outcome of using a particular task or feature.

**PLAIN ENGLISH**

Plain English sidebars define acronyms or jargon that you might not already know.

## Where to Go From Here

All right—we're ready to begin. First, let's orient ourselves in Google Voice and see what it has to offer with an overview in Lesson 1.

Then we discuss how to sign up and sign in to Google Voice in Lesson 2, which is all about getting started. You will get signed up with Google Voice and be ready to go.

Lesson 3, "Making a Call," is all about, guess what, making calls, while Lesson 4, "Answering a Call," is all about getting them. By the end of Lesson 4 we'll be well and truly launched into Google Voice, and you will have the basics down. The rest of the book is devoted to mastering Google Voice's many cool features.

Let's start now: Turn the page to Lesson 1, which gives you a 10,000-foot view of Google Voice and what it can do for you.

## LESSON 5

# Using Voicemail

Google Voice voicemail capabilities far outstrip simple answering machines with its seemingly endless options. You can receive messages on the Web or using your phone. You can record custom greetings, set security using PINs, add notes to voicemails, restrict voicemail access by phone, send all calls to voicemail automatically (or send just specific callers to voicemail), and much more.

## Welcome to Google Voicemail

If you've set up a Google Voice account, you've already got voicemail built in—how easy is that? Voicemail comes automatically with all Google Voice accounts.

By default, voicemail is enabled on your Google Voice phone number. So you don't have to lift a finger to set it up.

## Using Google Voice Voicemail on a Mobile Phone

Mobile phone users can get all the benefits of the Google Voice voicemail system. That's right—you can set up your mobile phone to send voice-mails directly to the Google Voice system.

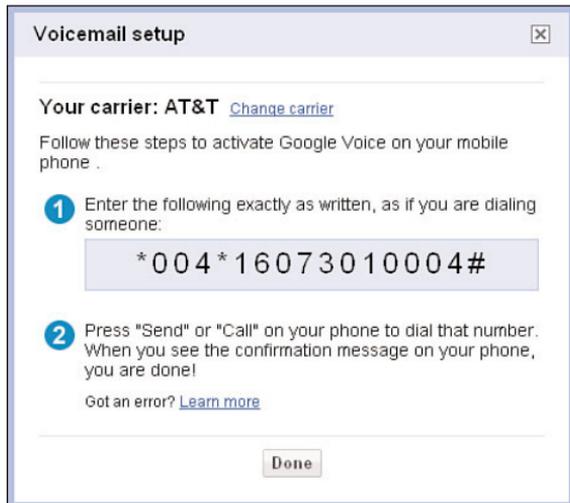
Currently, this works only if your mobile phone is from one of these carriers:

- ▶ Alltel
- ▶ AT&T
- ▶ Cricket Wireless
- ▶ MetroPCS
- ▶ Sprint

- ▶ T-Mobile
- ▶ US Cellular
- ▶ Verizon

If you use one of these service providers, the first thing to do is add your mobile phone to Google Voice as a forwarding phone (click the **Settings** link, the **Phones** tab, and then click the **Add Another Phone** link). Once you've done that, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link to open the Settings page.
3. Click the **Phones** tab.
4. Click the **Activate Google Voicemail on This Phone** link for the mobile phone you want to give Google Voice voicemail access to. The dialog box shown in Figure 5.1 opens.



**FIGURE 5.1** Activating a mobile phone for voicemail.

5. From your mobile phone, dial the number indicated in the dialog box.

6. Press **Call** or **Send** to make the call from your mobile phone. Google Voice answers and gives you a confirmation message.

You've now added your mobile phone to Google Voice and set it up to use Google Voice voicemail. Read on to find out how to use all of those great Google Voice voicemail features.

## You've Got Voicemail!

When someone calls you on your Google Voice number (or on a mobile phone you've assigned to Google Voice), the caller is prompted for his name by default, and Google Voice calls your listed phones. If you don't pick up, Google Voice informs the caller that you're not available with a recorded message (you find out how to customize the message later in this lesson) and asks him to "please leave a message after the tone." The standard answering machine beep then sounds.

At that point, your caller can leave a message and hang up. Great—you've got voicemail. Now how do you pick it up?

There are two ways to pick up your voicemail—on the Web (using the Google Voice site) and from a phone. We take a look at both in the following sections.

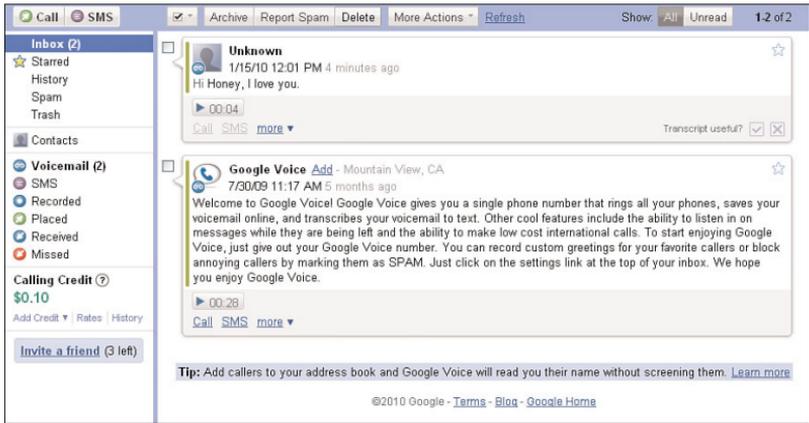
## Receiving Voicemail on the Web

The first way to pick up your voicemail uses the Web and the Google Voice site. By default, Google Voice sends you both the recording of the caller's message and a transcript of that message.

### Getting Voicemail Transcripts

Getting your voicemails on the Web is easy and takes just a couple of steps:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Voicemail** link. Clicking the Voicemail link displays your voicemail, as shown in Figure 5.2. The transcript appears as shown in the figure.



**FIGURE 5.2** Collecting voicemail.

Using caller ID information, Google Voice indicates who called, so you see the name of the person calling you and his or her phone number or Unknown for callers who block caller ID.

You can also click the **Inbox** link to see your voicemail, but you'll see all the messages and notifications you've received, not just your voicemails.

If you're picking up your voicemail from a mobile phone, use the Google Voice mobile site instead, [www.google.com/voice/m](http://www.google.com/voice/m). This site appears in Figure 5.3, and you can see the transcripts of your voicemails there.

## Listening to Your Voicemail

You don't have to read transcribed voicemail messages; you can also listen to the actual recording. That's useful if the transcript got messed up, if you're not sure about the caller's tone, or if you just want to hear a loved one's voice. To hear your voicemail using the Web, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Voicemail** link. Clicking the Voicemail link displays your voicemail.

You can also click the **Inbox** link to see your voicemail, but you'll see all the messages and notifications you've received, not just your voicemails.

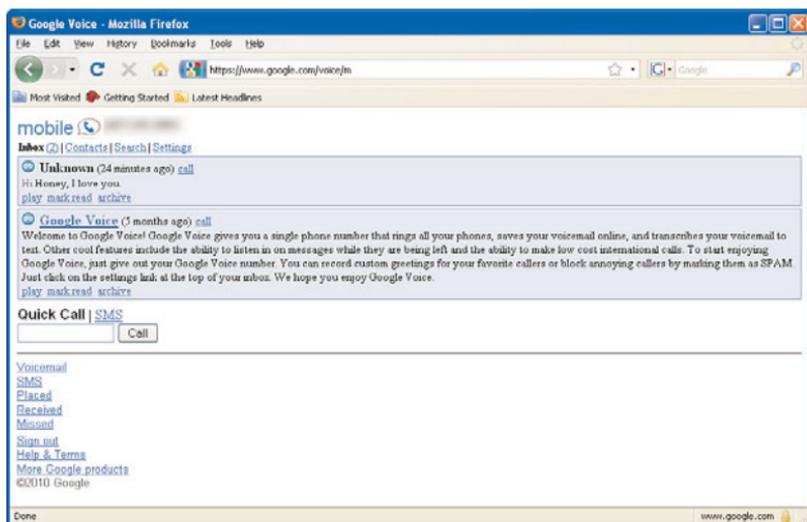


FIGURE 5.3 Collecting voicemail from the mobile site.

3. Click the box displaying a time and an arrow in the voicemail. The voicemail plays.

If you're picking up your voicemail from a mobile phone, use the Google Voice mobile site instead, [www.google.com/voice/m](http://www.google.com/voice/m). On the mobile site, click the Play link in the voicemail you want to play.

## Organizing Your Voicemail

If you get a lot of voicemails, clearing out a cluttered Inbox can be essential. You have three options here: archiving voicemails, marking them as read, or deleting them.

When you archive a voicemail, that voicemail is removed from your Inbox; from then on, it appears only when you click the Voicemail or History link (the History link contains all the voicemail you ever received). To archive a voicemail, just check the checkbox on the left in the voicemail display and click the **Archive** button.

When you mark a voicemail as read, Google Voice remembers that you've read it. You can then tell Google Voice *not* to display the voicemails you've already read in the Inbox. Here's how:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Inbox** link to display the Inbox.
3. Check the checkbox on the left in every voicemail you want to mark as read.
4. Click the **Unread** button in the Show section above the Inbox. All of the voicemails you've marked as read disappear from the Inbox.

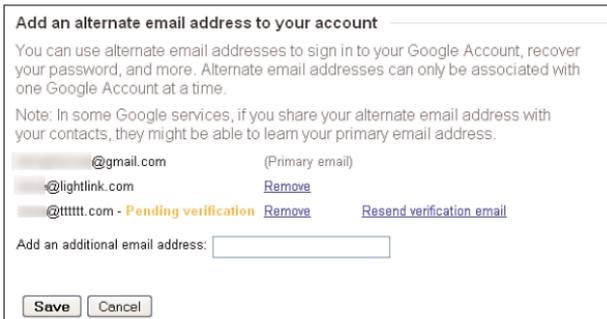
You can also delete voicemails. To do that, simply check the checkbox that appears on the left in the voicemail you want to delete and click the **Delete** button. Google Voice dumps that message in the Trash.

## **Sending Voicemail Notifications to a Different Email Address**

By default, when you get a voicemail, Google Voice sends a notification to your registered email account and a text message to any mobile phone you've connected to your account. You can change the email address that receives email notifications.

Before you can change the email address, though, you need to tell Google Voice about the new email address. To do that, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link. Clicking the Settings link opens the Settings page.
3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab. The tab SMS & Voicemail page appears.
4. Click the **Add a New Email Address** link. Doing so opens the page you can see in Figure 5.4.
5. Enter the new email address in the Add an Additional Email Address box.
6. Click the **Save** button. Google Voice sends a confirmation email to your new email address.



**FIGURE 5.4** Adding additional emails.

7. Click the link in the email from Google. Your browser opens in the web page that appears, Google Accounts asks you for your password.
8. Enter your password.
9. Click the **Verify** button. Google Accounts displays an Associated Email Address Verified message, “Your new email address has been associated with your Google Voice account.”

After you’ve told Google Voice about a particular email account, here’s how you can have notifications sent there:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link. Clicking the Settings link opens the Settings page.
3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab. Clicking this tab displays the page you see in Figure 5.5.
4. Select a new email address to send notifications to from the drop-down list box in the Voicemail Notifications section.
5. Click the **Save Changes** button. Your new email address is now set up.

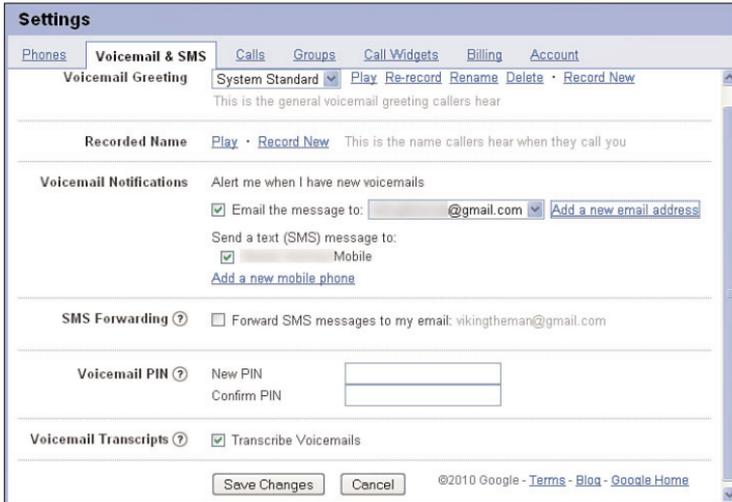


FIGURE 5.5 The SMS & Voicemail tab.

## Receiving Voicemail on a Phone

Besides using the Web to pick up your voicemail, you can also use any phone to hear your messages. To pick up your voicemail, call your Google Voice number. Of course, there are different options to select from and various choices to make, which we take a look at next.

### Using Your PIN

When you set up your Google Voice account, you chose a PIN you could use to get your voicemail. So when you call your Google Voice number, you're asked to enter that PIN. Here's how it works:

1. Call your Google Voice number from any phone (including any phone you've set up for forwarding Google Voice calls to).
2. During the voicemail greeting, press the \* key. Google Voice plays a beep.
3. Enter your four-digit PIN. Google Voice gives you a menu of prompts and tells you how many new voicemails you have.

4. Press **1** to hear your new voicemails. Google Voice plays the first new voicemail. After you listen, you get a menu of possible response keys to press:
  - ▶ Press **2** to return the call.
  - ▶ Press **7** to mark the message as read.
  - ▶ Press **9** to keep the message as new.
  - ▶ Press **4** for more options. When you press 4, you get this phone menu:
    - ▶ Press **1** to play the voicemail again.
    - ▶ Press **2** to return the call.
    - ▶ Press **3** for voicemail details (time, date, and so on).
    - ▶ Press **7** to mark the message as read.
    - ▶ Press **8** to send a junk voicemail.
    - ▶ Press **9** to keep the message as new.

After you've made your choice, Google Voice then plays the next message and gives you the same options.

5. When you're done with your voicemails, hang up.

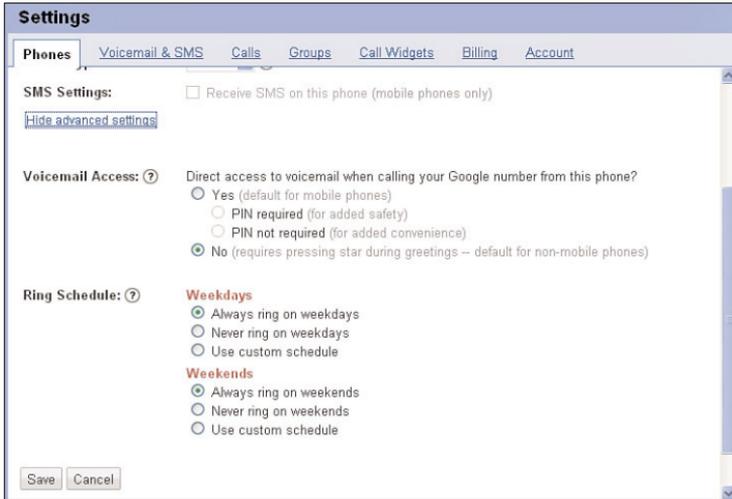
## Connecting Directly to Voicemail

You can also tell Google Voice to connect you directly to voicemail when you call in (that's the default for mobile phones). That way, you don't have to press \*, but you do still have to enter your PIN (unless you've told Google Voice not to ask for a PIN).

Here's how to make Google Voice connect you directly to voicemail when you call your Google number:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Phones** link to open the Phones page, which lists the phones you've told Google Voice about.
3. Click the **Edit** button for the phone you want to connect directly to voicemail.

4. Click the **Show Advanced Settings** link. Clicking this link opens the settings you see in Figure 5.6.



**FIGURE 5.6** Advanced phone settings.

5. Select the **Yes** radio button in the Voicemail Access section to connect the phone directly to voicemail.
6. Select the **PIN Required** or the **PIN Not Required** radio button to specify whether or not you will be asked to enter your PIN when you call your Google number. If you select PIN Not Required, you will go directly to voicemail without hearing a beep prompt for entering your PIN.
7. Click the **Save** button. Google Voice applies your settings.

## Recording a Greeting

Google loves customization, so you probably won't be surprised to learn that the Google Voice voicemail system can be fully customized, which means you can customize the greetings people hear when they call you. You can set up one greeting for your spouse, another for your best friend, a different one for your mom, and a businesslike one for the boss. It's all up to you.

There are several different ways to customize the greetings people hear when they go to voicemail—you can record just the name they hear, or you can do an entire greeting. You can also specify which callers get which messages.

Let's take a look at customizing the voicemail greeting now.

## Recording the Name Callers Hear

You can record your name so that callers know whose voicemail they've reached. Recording your name in this way does not customize any part of the voicemail greeting besides your name.

Here's how to customize your name in Google Voice's voicemail greeting:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link, which opens the Settings page.
3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab.
4. In the Recorded Name section, click **Record New**. A drop-down box appears with a list of your phones.
5. Select the phone you want Google Voice to use for recording your name and click **Connect**. Google Voice will call you on this phone so you can record your name.
6. Pick up the call.
7. At the prompt, say your name.
8. Hang up.

## Recording a Custom Greeting

Recording your name is just the beginning—you can record an entire custom greeting. In fact, you can record many different greetings and select which one is active at any one time.

To record a custom greeting, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link to open the Settings page.

3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab.
4. In the Voicemail Greeting section, click the **Record New** link.
5. In the dialog box that opens, enter a name for the greeting. Choose a name that describes the greeting, such as “General,” “On vacation,” or “Out of office.”
6. Click **OK**.
7. When the Record Greeting dialog box opens, select the phone you want Google Voice to call you on and click **Connect**. Google Voice will call you on the phone you select so you can record your new greeting.
8. Answer the call.
9. At the prompt, say your new greeting.
10. Hang up.

## Making a Recorded Greeting Active

After you’ve named and recorded a new greeting (such as “Happy Holidays”), you have to select that greeting so Google Voice will play it when callers reach your voicemail.

Here’s how to make a particular greeting active:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link to open the Settings page.
3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab. That tab opens, as shown in Figure 5.7.
4. In the Voicemail Greeting section, select the greeting you want to make active from the drop-down list box.
5. Click the **Save** button. Now, when a caller reaches your voicemail, Google Voice will play the greeting you selected.

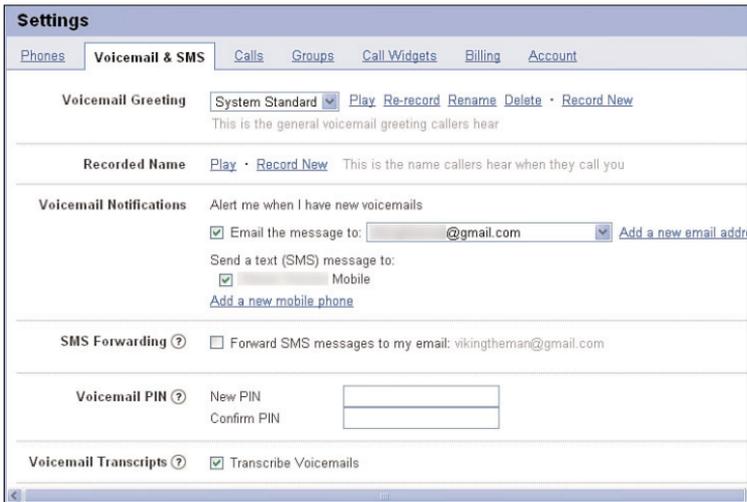


FIGURE 5.7 The SMS & Voicemail tab.

## Selecting Which Greeting to Play by Caller

Here's a cool feature—you can actually specify which of your recorded voicemail greetings to use for which caller. That means you can play one greeting for work contacts, one for your spouse, another for the kids, and even one for the Boy Scout troop you head.

This feature works on a contact-by-contact basis—that is, you can select a greeting for each of your contacts.

### NOTE

For this feature to work, you must have caller ID enabled for the contact, and the contact must be calling from a number that allows caller ID. Google Voice needs to verify which contact is calling before it can play the greeting you've specified for that contact.

Here's how to play a specific greeting for a particular contact:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Contacts** link to open the Contacts Manager.

3. Click the name of the contact you want to select a greeting for in the center column of the page. Clicking this link displays the contact's information.
4. Click the **Edit Google Voice Settings** link that appears beneath the contact's information. Google Voice opens the page you see in Figure 5.8.

**Tamsen Conner**

Customize settings below or add to a group to apply existing group settings.

---

**When this contact calls you:**  
Ring **Default** phones [Edit](#)

---

**When this contact goes to voicemail:**  
     ·   
This is the voicemail greeting callers hear

---

**Enable Call Presentation <sup>?</sup> for this contact?**  
 Use **Default** settings [Edit](#)

---

**FIGURE 5.8** Editing a contact's information.

5. In the When This Contact Goes to Voicemail: section, use the drop-down list box to select the greeting you want this caller to hear when connected to voicemail.

**NOTE**

The drop-down box shows only the default greeting and any other greetings you've already recorded. If you haven't yet recorded any custom greetings, follow the steps given earlier in this chapter.

6. Click the **Save** button. Google Voice assigns the greeting you've selected to your contact.

## Adding Notes to Voicemail

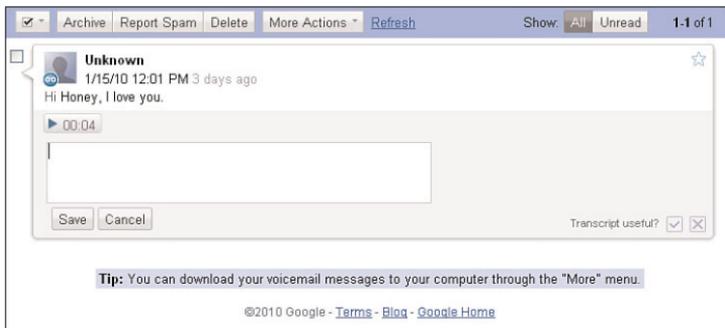
Have you ever scrambled for a pencil and a piece of paper so you could take notes on a voicemail as you listen? Google Voice makes that a thing

of the past by letting you add notes to your voicemail transcripts. In other words, you can annotate voicemail transcripts, entering text to appear beneath the transcript itself.

Notes are useful in many situations—for example, imagine that your boss leaves you a message with a list of five things for you to do. You could add a note to the message and edit that note to keep track of your progress on the to-do list.

To add a note to a voicemail transcript, do this:

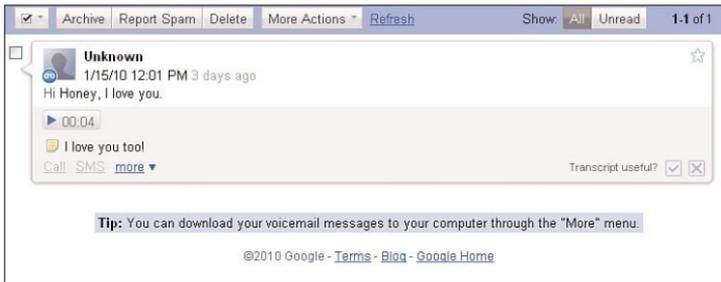
1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary). Your Inbox is displayed.
2. Find the voicemail transcript you want, click the **More** link at the bottom, and select the **Add Note** menu item. A box appears where you can type in your note, as shown in Figure 5.9.



**FIGURE 5.9** Adding a note to a transcript.

3. Enter the text of your note.
4. Click the **Save** button. The new note appears beneath the transcript, as shown in Figure 5.10.

You can edit the text of a note simply by clicking the note to open the text in an editing box. Make your changes and click the Save button to keep the changes you made.



**FIGURE 5.10** A new voicemail note.

## Sharing Your Voicemail

You don't have to keep your voicemails to yourself. You can share them by emailing, downloading, or embedding them in web pages. This can come in handy when someone leaves a message you need to pass on to other people: a changed meeting time, for example, or some good news you want to share. You share voicemails by using the More menu that appears at the bottom of every voicemail.

### Emailing a Voicemail

To email someone a voicemail, click the **More** menu at the bottom of the voicemail and select the **Email** menu item. When you do, Google Voice opens your email program and adds text to the email, including the link to the voicemail recording. If your registered email account is a Gmail account, Google Voice opens the dialog box you see in Figure 5.11.

#### NOTE

When you email someone a voicemail you've received, the email includes a link to the actual recording.

Fill in the rest of the email and click the **Send** button.

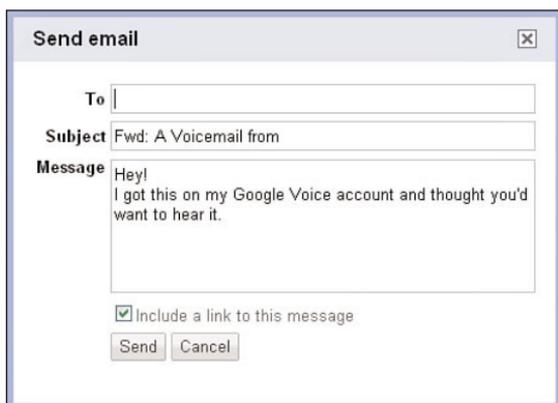


FIGURE 5.11 Emailing a voicemail.

## Downloading a Voicemail

To download a voicemail recording, locate the voicemail you want, click its **More** link, and select the **Download** menu item that appears. Google Voice instructs your web browser to download the voicemail as an .mp3 recording, and your browser displays a dialog box something like the one you see in Figure 5.12 (depending on your browser).

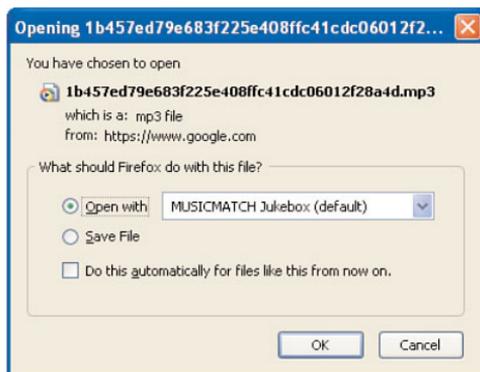


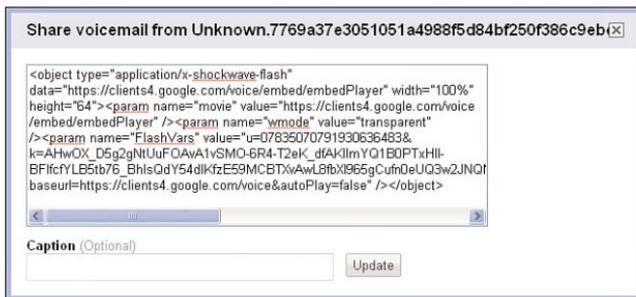
FIGURE 5.12 Downloading a voicemail.

Click **OK** to download the voicemail.

## Embedding a Voicemail in a Web Page

The third way to share a voicemail is to embed it in a web page. That means putting HTML code into the web page to display a clickable control that will play the voicemail. So you can set up a web page where others can listen to the voicemail.

Where do you get that HTML code? Google Voice generates it for you. To get it, find the voicemail you want, click its **More** link, and select **Embed**. The HTML you need appears in a dialog box as shown in Figure 5.13.



**FIGURE 5.13** Getting the HTML code to embed in a voicemail.

Copy that HTML code and insert it into the web page where you want to let others play the voicemail.

## Sending All Calls to Voicemail

As you learned in Lesson 4, “Answering a Call,” you can send all calls directly to voicemail when you need a little peace and quiet. That lesson showed you how to turn on the Google Voice Do Not Disturb setting from the website. If you’re not connected to the Internet, though, you can also turn on Do Not Disturb from any phone:

1. Call your Google Voice number.
2. Press \*. Google Voice responds with a beep prompt.
3. Enter your PIN. You hear the Google Voice phone menu.
4. Press 4 to access the main settings menu.

5. Press **4** again to access the temporary settings menu.
6. Press **1** to activate Do Not Disturb.
7. Press **1** to confirm your selection.
8. Hang up. Now, all incoming calls will go directly to voicemail, without ringing your phone.

The Do Not Disturb setting toggles on and off, so follow the same directions to turn it off again.

## Turning Off Transcriptions

Transcribed voicemail messages are a key feature of Google Voice. But you may decide that you don't want transcribed messages emailed to you, that you prefer to hear recorded messages only. If that's the case, just follow these steps to turn off voicemail transcription:

1. Navigate to the Google Voice site and log in (if necessary).
2. Click the **Settings** link to open the Settings page.
3. Click the **SMS & Voicemail** tab. This opens the page where you can turn off voicemail transcription, as shown in Figure 5.14.
4. In the Voicemail Transcript section, deselect the **Transcribe Voicemails** checkbox.
5. Click the **Save Changes** button.

And that's it—Google Voice will no longer transcribe your voicemails. Of course, you can still listen to your recorded voicemail messages as usual.

If you change your mind and want those transcribed messages to start appearing in your Inbox again, you can enable voicemail transcripts at any time. Repeat steps 1–3, but in step 4, select the **Transcribe Voicemails** checkbox and then click **Save Changes**. You've turned voicemail transcription back on.

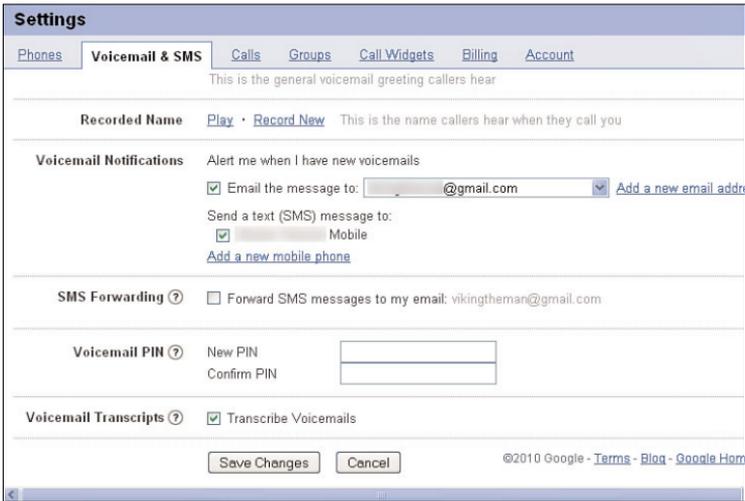


FIGURE 5.14 Turning off voicemail transcription.

## Summary

In this Lesson, you mastered using voicemail with Google Voice. As you continue to send and receive calls with Google Voice, your list of contacts will grow. Lesson 6, “Working with Contacts and Groups,” teaches you how to work with contacts and groups, which let you gather related contacts and manage them all at once.

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