

Collaborating with Google Docs

Overview

As part of the Google Apps for Education suite, Google offers an online word processor that allows you to create and manage documents online very easily. So why would you want to use **Google Docs**? Simple: collaboration. A Google Doc is not meant to be a replacement for all the fancy options available in a Word document. However, the thing that a Google Doc is great for is group document editing. It lets you create a document, share it with others, and then allow people to make changes and post comments directly on the document without having to email it around or worry about "who has the latest version".

One of the issues we've seen with Google Docs is that the concept of collaborative document editing is not always familiar to everyone. We often send a Google Doc to someone (accessed by a link) only to have them paste it into a Word document and send it back to us with their changes. This defeats the purpose of document collaboration, but it happens because the recipient is simply not familiar with how a Google Doc operates.

To help, here is a quick overview of how Google Docs work and how it can be a valuable system for document collaboration.

Use the following links to navigate this document:

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Creating a Document

1. To create a document, you would first go to your **Google Drive** interface. **Drive** is where documents are stored.
2. Once you are logged in with your Google account (*either via Gmail or your Google Apps for education account*) click on the icon where you see the small 9 boxes (Figure 1)
3. Then click **Drive** (Figure 2)
4. This drops you into a screen that lists all of your current documents. If you have not created any, the screen will have no documents there yet.
 - a. To create a new doc, click on the "Create" button and you'll see some options: (Figure 3)



Figure 1

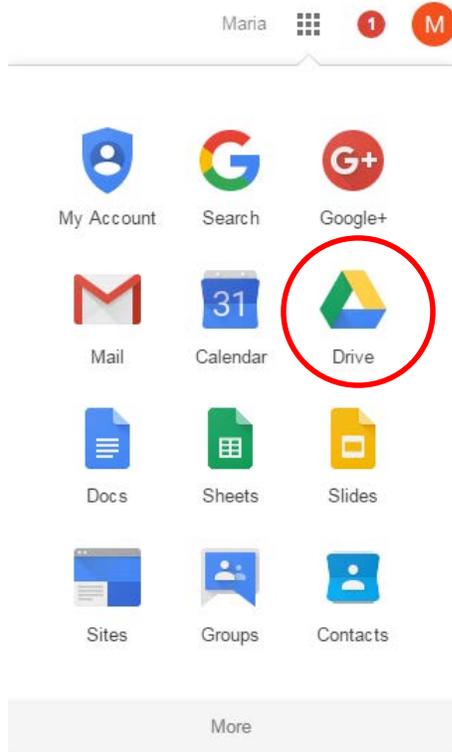


Figure 2

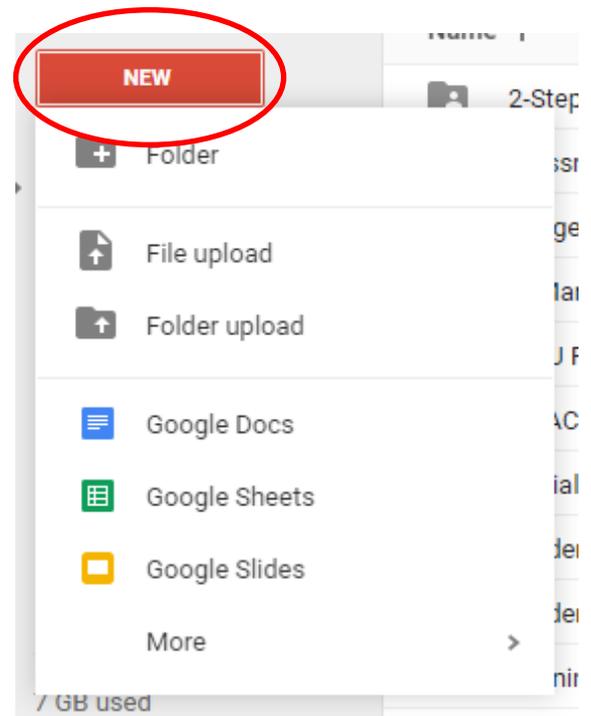
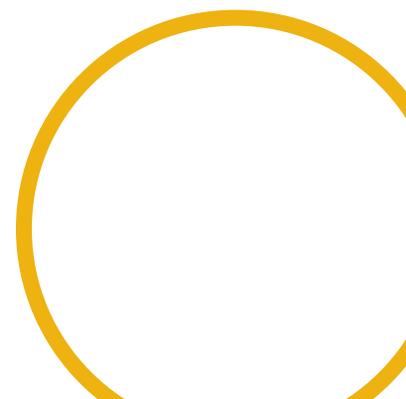


Figure 3



5. You can add a new folder to store docs in, or you can create a new document. You can also create a new spreadsheet (*similar to Excel*) or presentation (*similar to PowerPoint*), but we'll stick with a standard document for now. Just be aware that the same options apply to other types of docs, as well.
6. Once you create a new document, you'll be presented with a blank page with a standard set of word processing tools at the top (Figure 4)

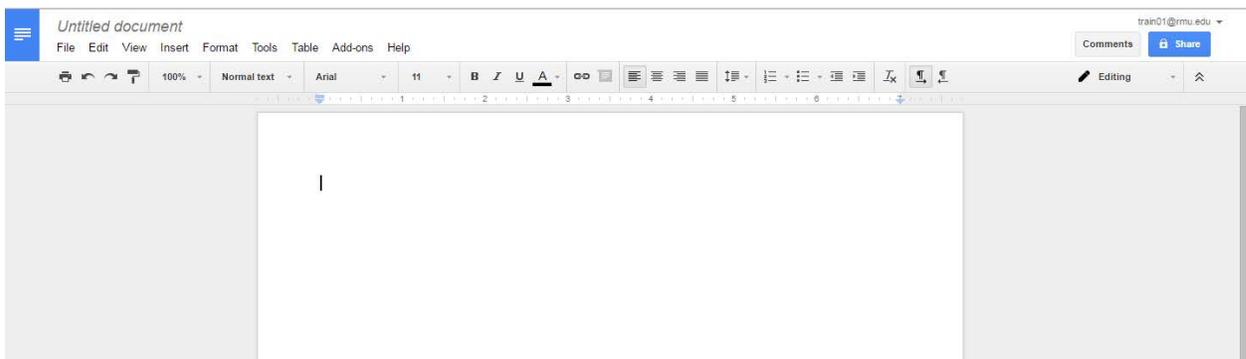


Figure 4

7. The first thing you'll want to do is name your doc. Do this by double-clicking the words "Untitled document" at the top and giving it a new name (Figure 5).
8. Press **Enter**

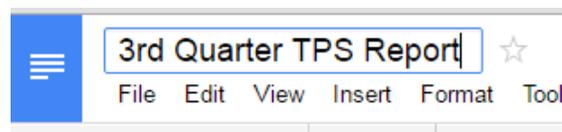
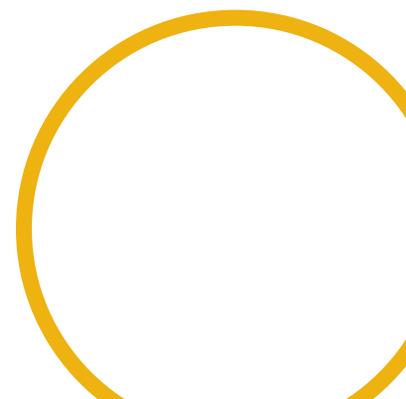


Figure 5

Now you are ready to write! You can treat this just like a regular Word document. Type and format away. Additionally, your document is stored in the cloud, which means you don't have to worry about saving it to your computer or losing it. It's auto-saved every minute, so all you need to do to get back to it is open your web browser, go to your Google Drive, and click on it. Easy!



Collaboration

Now that you have created a doc, it's time to see where Google Docs really shines. Let's set up a scenario that might be familiar to you. You are working on a document that requires feedback and input from others in your office. So you put together a report as a Word document and email it to a group of 4 other people with the note: "Please give me your changes." Each person then makes notes and changes in the doc and emails it back. Now you have 5 different versions that you need to consolidate back into one. Ugh!

A Google Doc eliminates this headache. All you would need to do is "share" the doc with your co-workers and ask them to make their changes directly in the same document. You are now working on one document as opposed to 5 different docs.

1. To do this, you would first click on the **Share** button in the upper right (Figure 6)
2. This will open up a screen that allows you to share the doc (Figure 7)

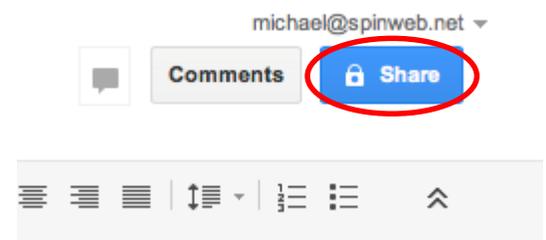


Figure 6

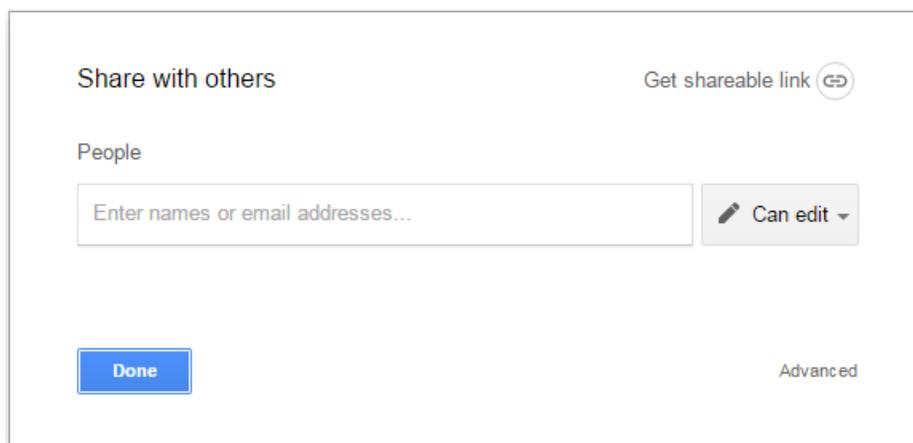


Figure 7

- By default, it is shared with no one. Now, let's say I want to share it with some of my co-workers. I would enter their email addresses into the **People** section in order to "invite" them to work on the doc with me (Figure 8)

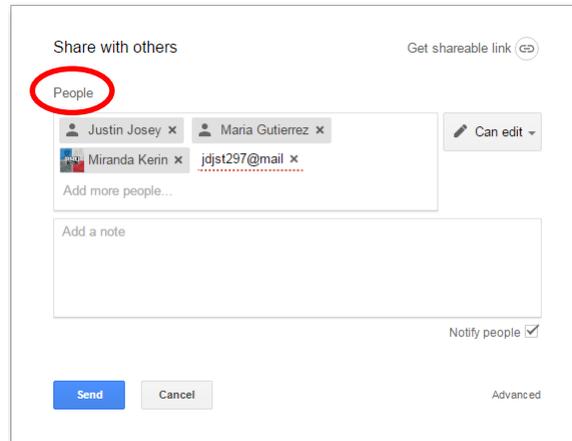


Figure 8

Note: If you start typing an email address that is already in your contacts list, it will auto-complete with their full name, so you can just select them from a list as you can see above. Otherwise you can just type in their entire email address. Separate multiple email addresses with a comma. Also note that by default you are inviting people to edit the doc. This means that the people you invite will be able to make changes. However, don't worry... you can always undo their changes (more on that later).

- Once you click **Send** an email will be sent to the people you invited with a link to the doc. They will then be able to click the link and view it, as well as edit it.
- You can also add a personal message to the doc (*which is a good idea*) so that the people you are inviting have some context.

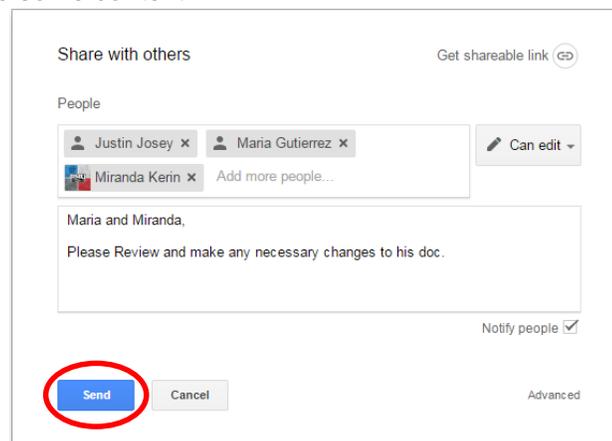
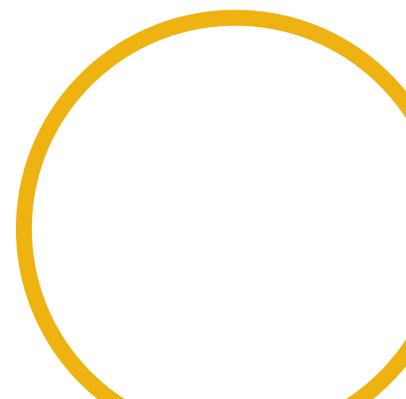


Figure 9

Note: Be sure to leave "Notify people via email" checked so they will know about it.



6. So what happens now? Well, the people you invited will now get an email with a link to the doc (Figure 10)

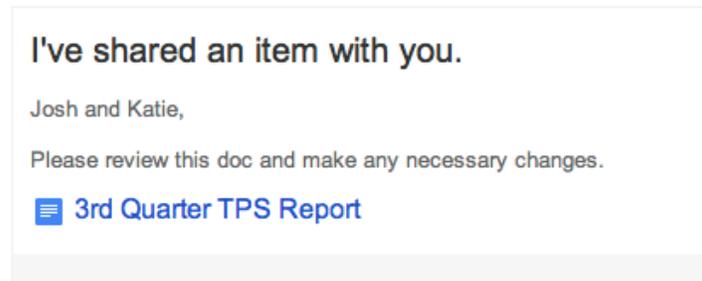


Figure 10

7. Now they can simply click on the link to go to the doc and edit it directly online.

Here's the cool part: they can make all the changes they want at the same time, and every version is tracked and saved automatically. Additionally, you can compare and roll back to any earlier version you want. People can also add comments to the doc as a way of offering feedback without actually editing it.

3rd Quarter TPS Report (This is a header)

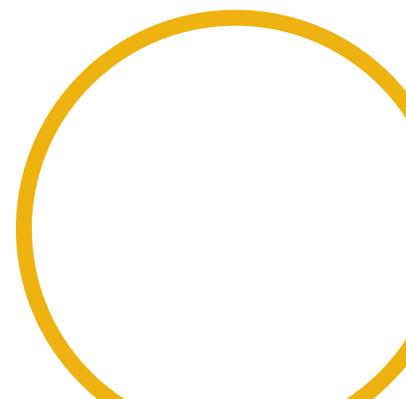
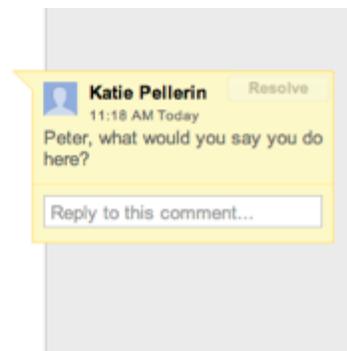
Submitted by: Peter Gibbons

Date: month, year

This is some text. Here is some additional text that I think is also important.

This is a bulleted list:

- Item 1
- Item 2
- [Item 3](#)



8. If you want to see the entire revision history of the doc, go to the **File** menu and choose **See revision history** (Figure 11)

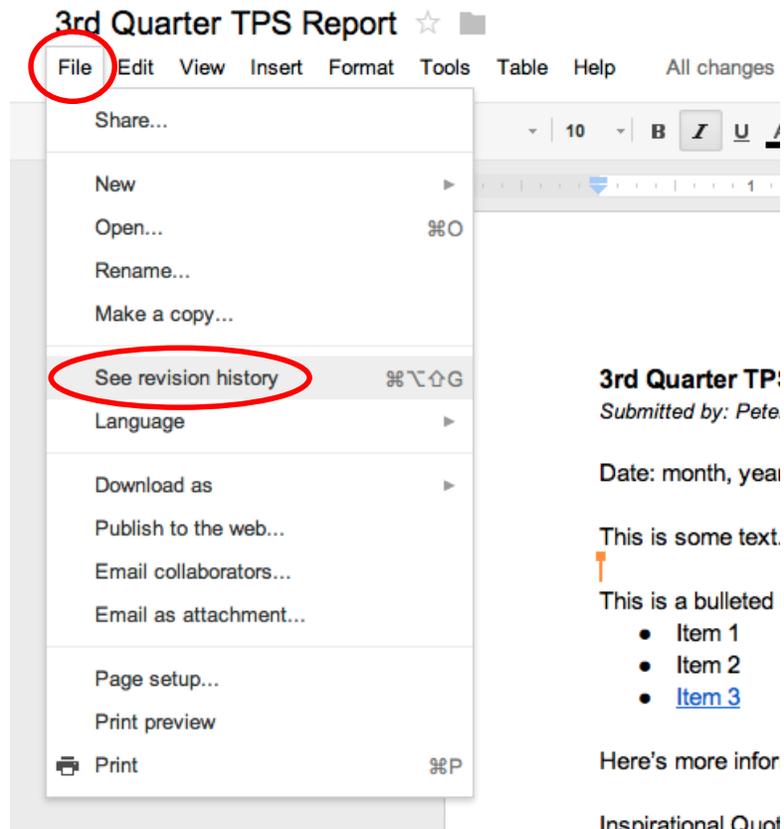
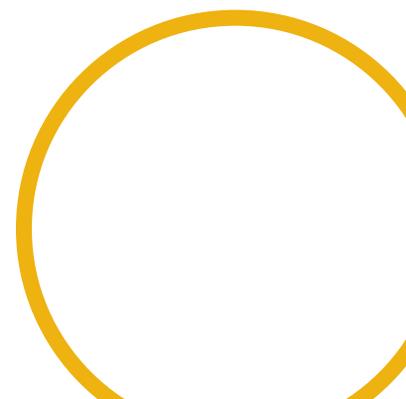


Figure 11



9. Now, you will be able to track every change. You will see a list of all the different versions along with time stamps and who made the changes (Figure 12)
10. Clicking on a version will show that version of the document to you. If you want to roll back to a previous version, you can choose to **restore this revision** (Figure 13)

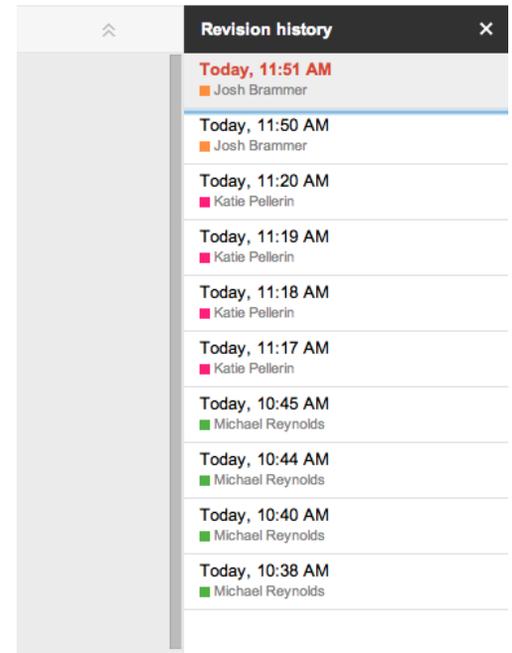


Figure 12

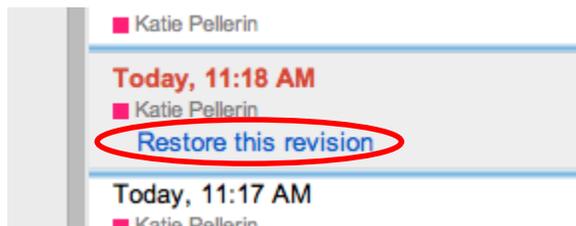
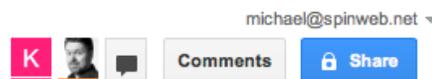


Figure 13

11. Here's another cool feature. While people are editing the doc, you can see it in real time. You will be able to see who is viewing it based on their icon in the upper right, and you can see who is making what changes in real time (Figure 14)



3rd Quarter TPS Report (This is a header)

Submitted by: Peter Gibbons

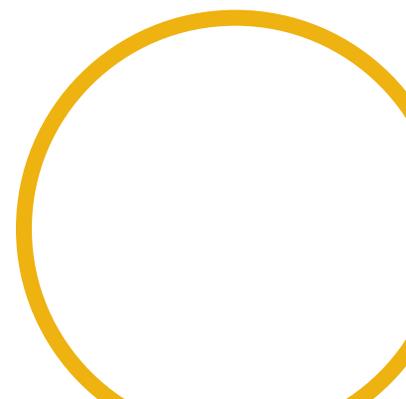
This is some text. Here is some additional

Katie Pellerin

This is a bulleted list:

- Item 1
- Item 2
- Item 3

Figure 14



Pretty cool, huh? And remember, there is no need to save anything. All changes are auto-saved every minute so the document is always up to date.

As you can see, using a Google Doc for collaborative editing is a very efficient process. It means that everyone is only editing one document; everyone always sees the latest version; and all changes and comments are tracked and saved. Additionally, it can be edited from tablets and mobile devices for even more flexibility.

If anyone wants to download a copy of the doc in another format, like Word or PDF, that's also easy:

1. Go to the File menu and choose **Download as** to export the doc in another format (Figure 15)
2. This allows you to take the finished version and use it any way you want to.

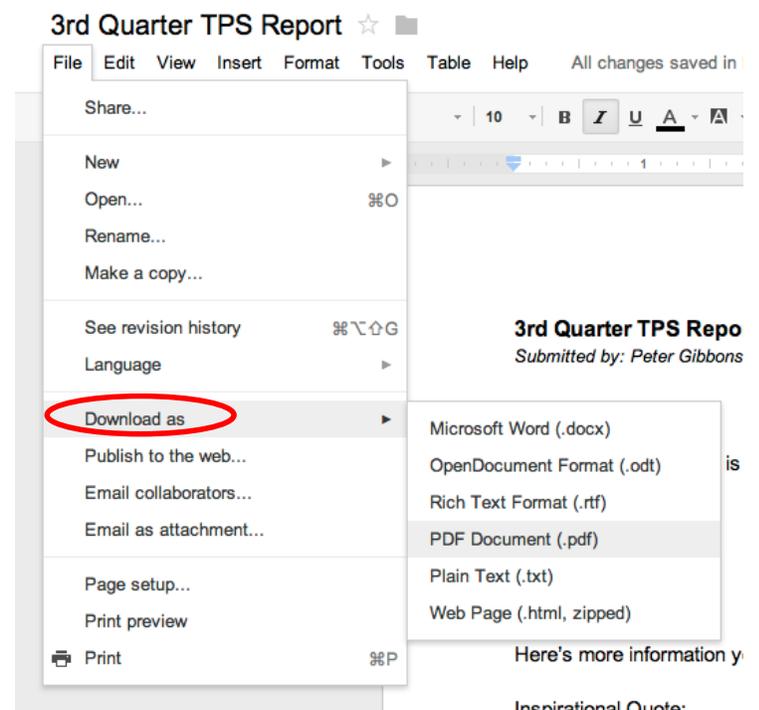
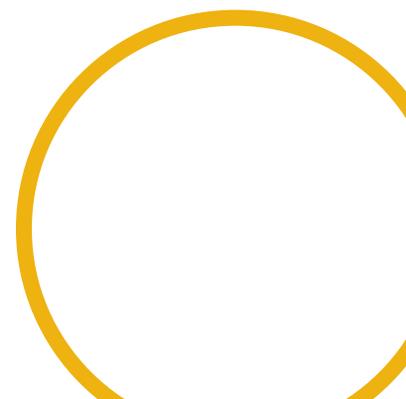


Figure 15



Use Cases

There are lots of ways to use Google Docs. You can share docs within your own organization (*via Google Apps*) or you can share docs with people outside your organization, as well. Simply use their email address when sharing, and they will get a link to edit (*or just view if you want to offer view-only access*).

Some ways to use Google Docs include:

1. Drafting a memo or policy in your office that needs group feedback
2. Taking notes for a meeting and sharing the doc with meeting attendees
3. Sharing a Google Spreadsheet with your sales team and asking them to keep it up to date with stats
4. Working on a blog post or an article as a team
5. Collaborating on meeting agendas
6. Planning for group work when serving on boards and committees

The possibilities are endless. Any time you need to collaborate on a document with someone else is a good time to consider a Google Doc. Some other advantages of Google Docs include:

1. It's cross-platform - works on Mac, PC, iPad, smart phone (etc.) with no software required
2. It's stored in the cloud so data is safe and secure
3. It saves steps since there is no need to email attachments back and forth

I hope this has given you a good primer on the advantages of collaborating with Google Docs!