

What is Google Plus?



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Google+ – or Google Plus – is a social network from Google.

Some of its tools and features come from existing services and platforms, such as the Picasa photo storing and sharing platform. Some of the features are similar to other popular social networks and micro-blogging platforms.

Google+ was opened to a small number of users to test in June 2011. Google then gave some of those initial users invitations to invite a small number of their contacts. The service has since been opened up to everyone. It was given an overhaul in April, 2012.

Google+'s key benefits and features

- You can find Google+ at plus.google.com.
- To join Google+ you need a Google account (such as for accessing Gmail).
- The main page that appears when you sign in consists of a 'stream' of updates, conversations and shared content – similar in many respects to the [Facebook](#) news feed or [Twitter](#) stream.
- When you add a contact to your Google+ account, you assign them to one or more 'circles', which is a way of categorising and organising people.
- When you first sign up, you'll see some 'circles' that have already been set up by Google, including 'Friends' and 'Acquaintances'. You can also add your own.
- You can share messages or links with everyone or with only those within designated circles. This gives you more flexibility than Twitter and is a similar concept to 'groups' on Facebook.
- Your circles are private – that is, no one can see how you've named your circles or which circles they or anyone else has been put in.
- The 'Notifications' section will let you know when someone adds you to one of their circles (though not which circle) and when someone has commented on or reacted to content that you've shared or commented on.
- You can make comments underneath content shared by other users that you follow, and you can also '+1' it. The latter is similar to 'liking' on Facebook.
- You can also share that content, if the original poster allows it. This is similar to 'retweeting' on Twitter.

- If the original poster allows it, after you interact with a post, Google+ threads responses and informs you of any updates. If this starts to get annoying, you can 'mute' these updates.
- The 'Hangout' application allows users to video chat.
- You can upload and organise photos using Google Photos (previously called Picasa).
- There is a Google + app available for smartphones.
- Google+ launched 'pages' in late 2011, allowing groups, organisations and companies to sign up.
- It is now possible to choose a personalised Google Plus address.

Next steps

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