

As we have moved to using Google Apps for education, one particular area of confusion for users has been the idea of Google Groups. Initially, when we migrated away from Microsoft Exchange and to Google Apps, we said goodbye to the use of Outlook Distribution Lists. Distribution lists in the past were a way for folks to email a group of people via one email message.

In Google Apps we have that capability provided to us in two different formats. The first, and most basic, is the use of Groups from within Contacts. If you are in your Gmail and want to create a group made up of individuals you regularly email the same information, navigate to the contacts application and select “New Group...” from your left margin navigation. It is usually near the bottom of the list. Once you have selected “New Group...” you are presented with the opportunity to name your new group.

New group

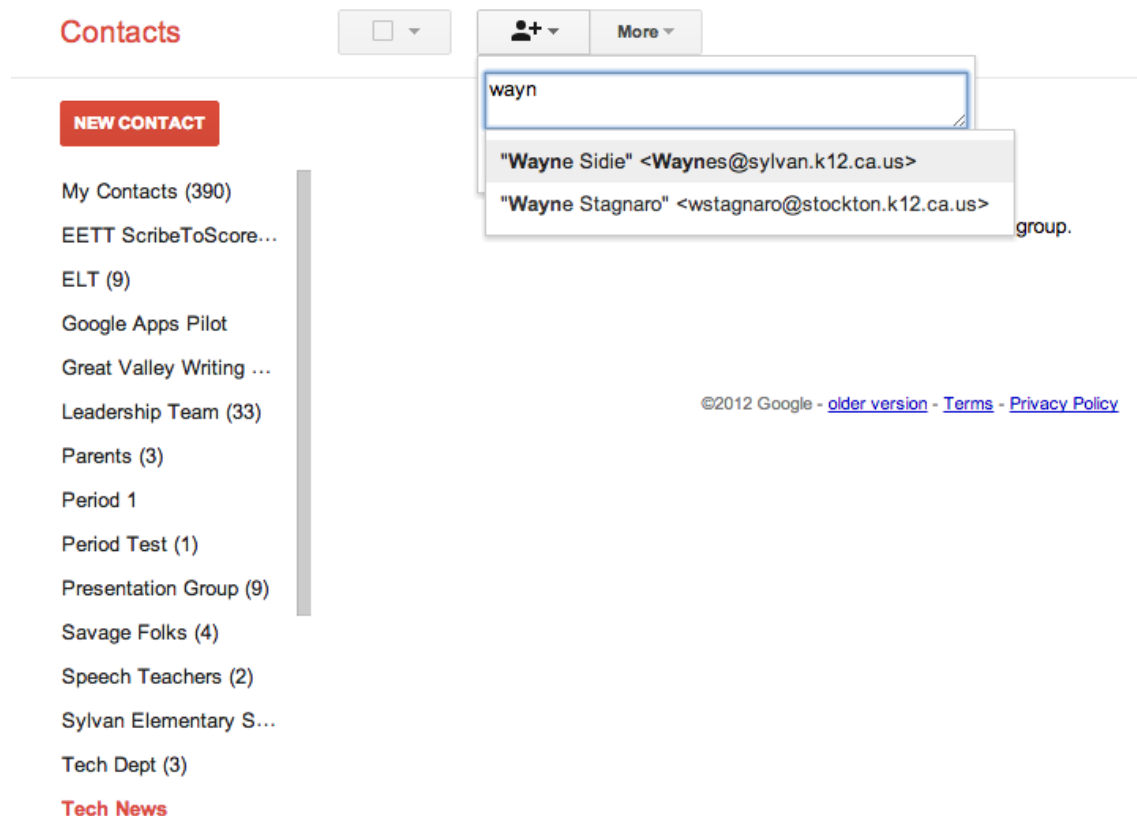
Please enter a new group name.

OK Cancel

asensney@sylvan.k12.ca.us (209) 681-2975

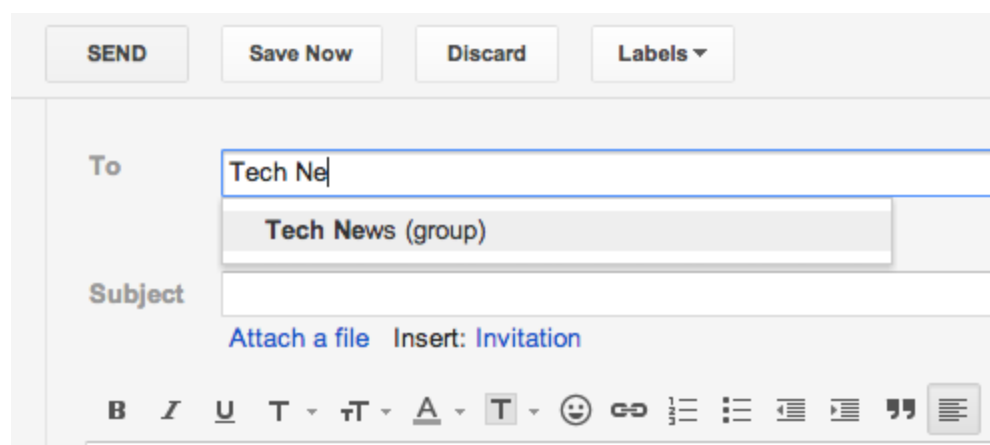
After naming your new group and clicking OK, the new group you just created will show up in your left margin navigation.

If you click on your newly created contact group, you will be presented with a blank list and the opportunity to add people to your new group.



You can continue to add people to your contact group separating each email address with a comma.

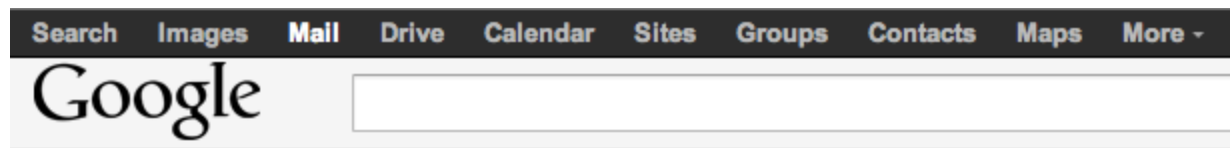
After you click the Add button, not visible in image above, but very important to not to forget to do, and add the people to your contact group, you may begin using that group by just typing the name of the group in the TO: field of an email message.



Contact Groups are a quick and easy way to create a personal email groups. The big disadvantage to Contact Groups are they can not be easily shared and are limited to the basic functionality of sending a single email out to a list of folks. In some instances, simple and basic is just what you need.

In other instances, you need a group that is a little more advanced. You need one that can be shared with others. You need one that keeps a record of all messages and discussions related to those messages. You need one that allows group members to review past messages and rank their relevancy to the initial discussion topic. You need a group that does not send individuals the message but instead sends them to a the Group site similar to a message board. These and other examples call for the second type of groups in Google Apps.

Groups in Google Apps are much more powerful tool the the first contact group example. As a result of their increased power they take a little more effort in order to learn how to use them. If you are a Google Apps for Education organization, and the Group app has been turned on by your Google Apps administrator, you will see a menu item for Groups in the black navigation bar at the top of you Google window.



Groups

Welcome to the new Google Groups

The new Google Groups is an improved way to participate in online discussions.



My groups



Browse all



New group

All of your discussions in one place

Organize with favorites and folders, choose to follow along via email, and quickly find unread posts.

Express yourself

Use rich-text editing to customize your posts with fonts, colors, and images.

When you open Groups you are presented with three buttons at the top of the interface: My Groups, Browse All, and New Group. *(It should be noted, that Google recently updated Groups and requests that all users implement the new interface. If yours appears different, it may be because you are still on the old Groups interface. If you switch to the new interface, for now, you can navigate back to the old one if you wish later.)*

The first button, My Groups, lists all the groups you are a member of, including those groups that you are the owner. We will discuss roles, such as “owner” and their different abilities later.

Groups

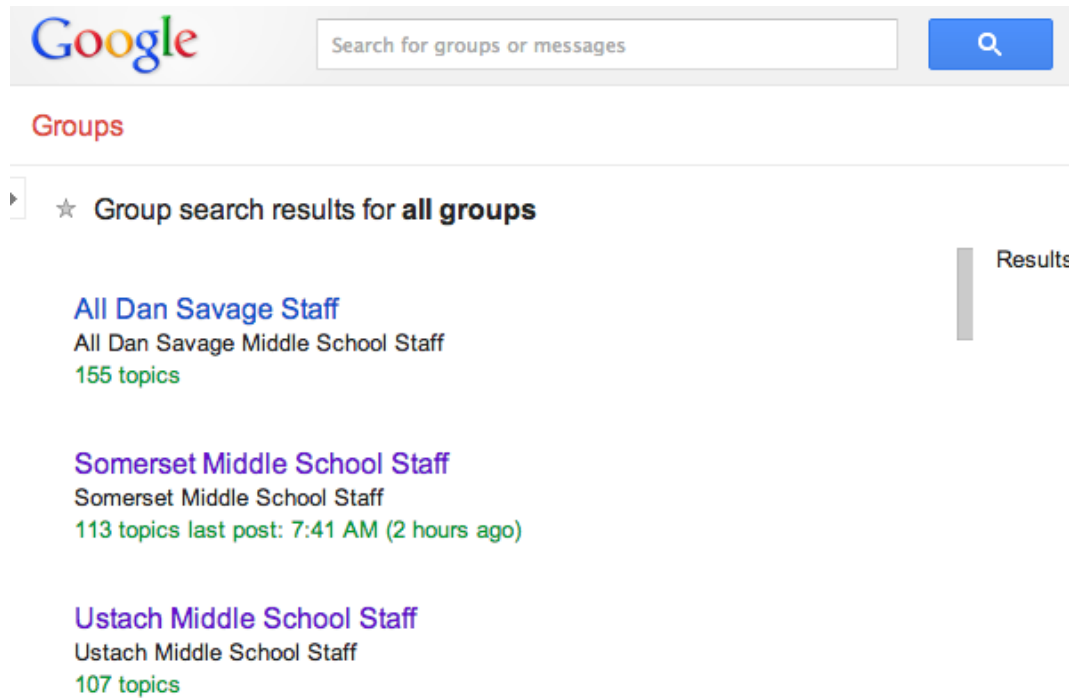
Edit memberships

⚙️

You also belong to groups in 2 other organizations. [show](#)

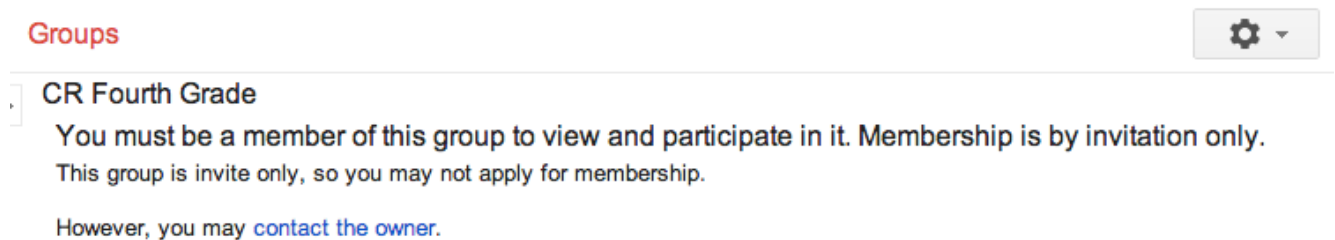
☆ Aeries Users All the Aeries users.	California K-14 Education News Headlines John Halverson Sep 7 (3 days ago)
☆ All Certificated All certificated staff	
☆ All Recipients (Owner) All users of the Sylvan Union Google Apps Domain.	Fwd: FW: Enter the Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar Contest! Yvonne Perez Sep 9 (12 hours ago)
☆ District Office All district office staff.	Fwd: FW: Enter the Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar Contest! Yvonne Perez Sep 9 (12 hours ago)
☆ Executive Leadership Team (Owner) Members of the executive leadership team	Documents needed for 2012-13 Evaluation John Halverson Sep 5 (4 days ago)
☆ Google Sites Users (Owner) This group is dedicated to discussions revolving around the use of Google Sites for web site publishing.	
☆ Leadership Team Members of the leadership team	FLAG HALF STAFF ALERT Naomie Rodrigues Sep 7 (2 days ago)

The second button, Browse All, allows you to view all the Groups that have been created in your organization and have their visibility permissions set to allow them to show up in the list.



It should also be noted that individual organization members can search for groups or even search for specific content within a group. Groups discovered while browsing all your organization's group can be configured to present information to a potential new group member in a variety of formats. Two of the most common formats used are:

- Read Only - Shows visitor all posts but requires they join group to post.
- Must be a member to view



One of the advantages of Google Groups is that groups can be managed by a central individual but still shared with a group. Membership can be controlled and the permissions of each member can be set by the owner or manager of the group. In addition, as illustrated in the image above, prospective members can request membership to the group.

The following paragraphs will provide multiple scenarios for how new Groups can be configured and examples of how they can be utilized.

Groups

←

CREATE GROUP

Cancel

Group name

Group email address

@ sylvan.k12.ca.us

invalid email address

Group description

Group's primary language

This is the language emails from the Google groups service will be sent in. For example: digest emails, email footers, etc.

English (United States)

Group type

Group types are pre-c little easier. You can your needs. Select a

Email list

Web forum

Q&A forum

Collaborative inbox

Select a group type

Email list

An email list allows users to post from the web or through email. This is a mailing list group.

When you create a New Group, you have the ability to choose from four template configurations: Email List, Web Forum, Q & A Forum, or Collaborative Inbox. These template configurations set the features available to the selected format. However, these can be changed by the owner of the group if desired.

Email List -

An email list allows users to post from the web or through email. This is what most folks are familiar with in terms of emailing groups of folks in a list that is managed by a central person.

In an email list you have the ability to limit who can send out to the list. The most restrictive permission is to only allow the manager of the group to send emails out to the group.

Basic permissions

View topics

Select groups of users ▾

✓ Managers of the group

✓ All members of the group

✓ All organization members

✓ Owners of the group

All members of the group, All organization members

s group.

members of the group, All organization members

These users can post messages to this group.

Join the group

Select who can join ▾

✓ Anyone in the organization

Settings can be set based on the user's role to view and post in a group.

You toggle permissions in the resulting list by selecting, clicking on, the items in the list.

Web Forum -

A web forum is designed to allow users to primarily interact with the group through the web user interface (web page). These forums have web-only features (e.g. tagging of posts) initially enabled. Users post topics through the web user interface (web page), but can still receive updates via email. This Group interface is similar to a web message board.

Q & A Forum -

A Questions and Answer forum allows members to post questions and follow-up answers. members can identify which answer are the best and mark questions that they are also interested in. As with web forums, user's need to post through the web ui, but can receive updates via email. As an educator, I can see how this type of group could be useful with students for sparking discussions, and peer evaluation regarding a specific content topic.

Collaborative Inbox -

A collaborative inbox allows member of a group to manage the workflow state of topics within the group. The groups have specific features and permissions set. If you choose not to use these features, they will need to be disabled individually.

sylvancollaborative

By



me (John Patten) ▼

Subject

Testing Collaborative Discussions Out

Type of post

Start a discussion ▼

☐ Display at the top☐ Lock [Attach a file](#) [Add a reference](#) [Add Cc](#)

Normal ▼

Normal ▼

B*I*U[A](#) ▼ ▼[Link](#)

This is a test.

Tags: comma separated list



▶ sylvancollaborative ☆

My membership

Testing Collaborative groups out

[Edit welcome message](#) [Clear welcome message](#)

Testing Collaborative Discussions Out (1)



By me - 1 post - 0 views - updated 11:17 AM (less than a minute ago)

Perform on the selected topic

Set duplicate

Take

Assign

Mark no action needed

Display at the top

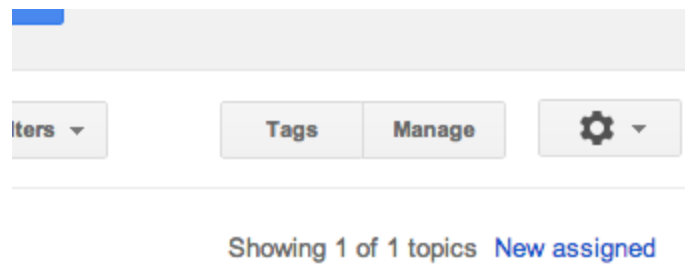
Lock Replies

Lock Topic

Delete

Report abuse

When you need to modify the template settings above, every group has a “manage” button.



The manage button brings up the following settings: Members, Settings, Permissions, Roles, and Information.

We will look at each one and its individual configuration settings separately.

Members -

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▼ Members All members Invite members Direct add members Outstanding invites Join requests	☐	Display name	Role	Email
	☐	me	Owner	jpatten@sylvan.k12.ca.us

From the members settings you can: view all members, invite members, directly add members, review outstanding invites you have sent, and review requests to join the group.

Settings -

Groups

←

Save

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► Members

▼ Settings

Email options

Identity

Moderation

New members

Tags

Categories

Subject prefix

This text will be added to the subject lines of all messages posted to the group.

- We recommend surrounding a prefix with [], or { }.
- Add '%d' to include the message number in the subject.
- Leave this field blank to have no subject prefix.
- Click an example to use it:
[sylvan

Email footer

☐ Display how to post to this group by email.

☐ Display how to unsubscribe from this group by email.

☐ Display 's group webpage URL.

In the Moderation setting, the owner of the list can set all posts to be moderated before publishing to group. This could come in handy when teaching students responsibility and ethical use of technology.

Groups

←

Save

sylvan

collaborative

View topics

Select groups of users ▾

✓ All members of the group, All organization members

These users can view topics in this group.

Members

Settings

Permissions

Basic permissions

Posting permissions

Moderation permissions

Access permissions

Post

Select groups of users ▾

✓ All members of the group, All organization members

These users can post messages to this group.

Join the group

Select who can join ▾

✓ Anyone in the organization

It should be noted, if you would like to allow people from outside your organization to post to your group, you will need to have your Google Apps administrator configure your Google Groups to allow “outside this domain access,” “Public on Internet.”

Dashboard	Organization & users	Groups	Domain settings	Reports	Advanced tools	Setup	Support	Settings
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System

Security

Services

Calendar

Chat

Contacts

Drive and Docs

Email

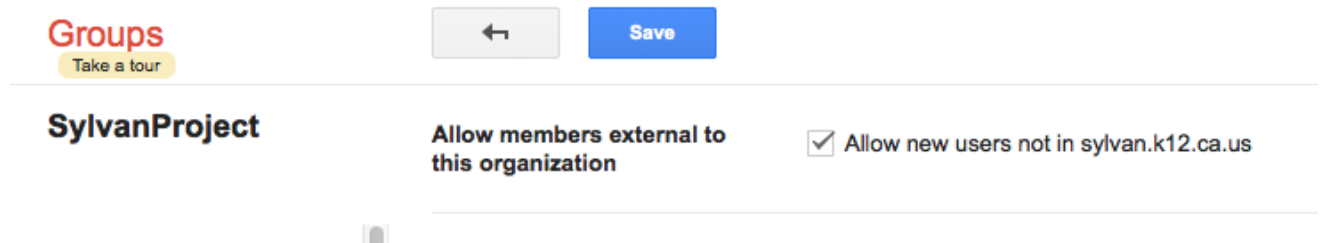
Google Groups for Business

Mobile

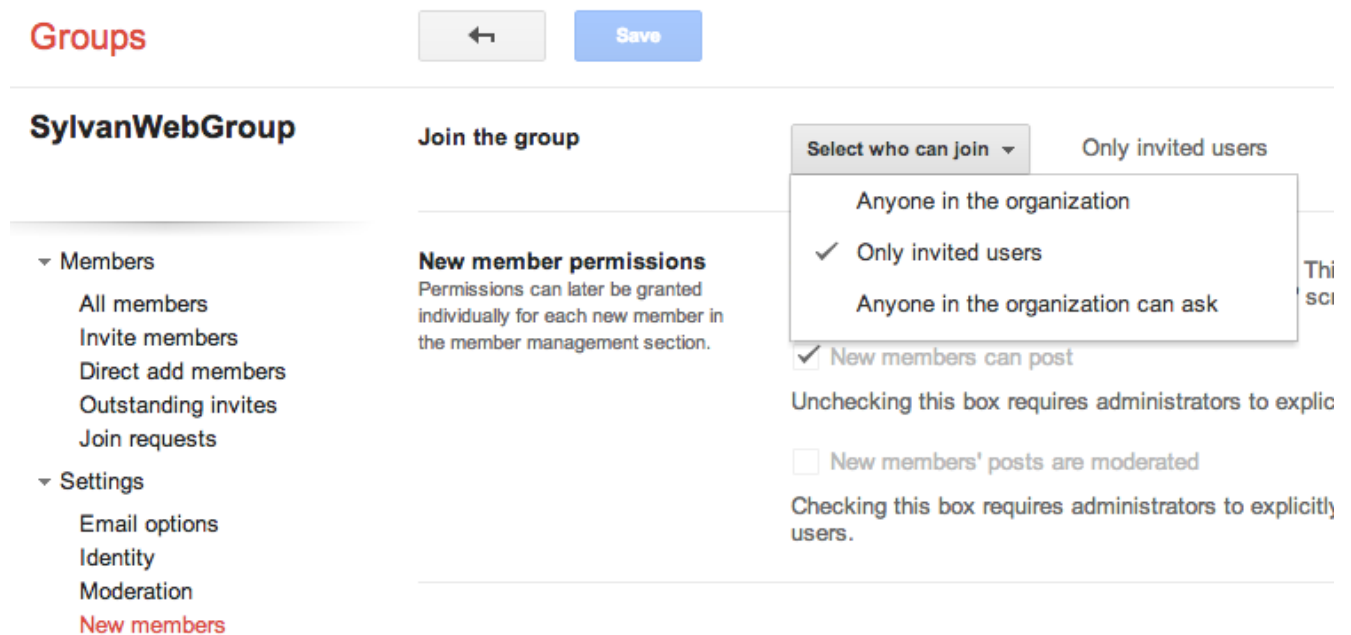
Google Groups for Business settings

Web Address	Your users can access Google Groups for Business at: http://groups.google.com/a/sylvan.k12.ca.us http://groups.google.com/a/student.sylvan.k12.ca.us Change URL
Sharing Options	Outside this domain - access to groups Select the highest level of access to your groups for users outside this domain: ☐ Public on the Internet - Anyone on the Internet can view, search, and post to groups ☒ Private - No one outside this domain can access groups. Existing external members can only send email to groups.

Once that is done, your Google Administrator will need to configure your Group to allow members external to this organization. It is a two step process to configure access to your groups outside of your organization.



Group owners may want to change the “New members” option in the Settings to allow “Only invited users” as most Groups open to the Internet are usually targeting a specific known audience in K12 projects.



Roles -

There are three default roles in your Group administration panel. They are member, manager, and owner. In addition, roles can be created with specific or custom responsibilities. For

example, if you wanted your group to have message moderation turned on, you could create a specific user role where that individual could approve or delete messages..

- ☐ **Owner**
Contains all owners in the group. This group can not be deleted and the permissions can not be modified.
- ☐ **Manager**
Contains all managers in the group. This group can not be deleted.
- ☐ **Member**
Contains all members in the group. This group can not be deleted.

Information -

The information drop down allows for the setting of general information such as the name of the group, description of the group, the type of group (discussion, questions, discussions and questions), whether the group is listed in the organization's directory. It should also be noted that deleting a group is found in the Advanced link within the Information dropdown

invite members Direct add members Outstanding invites Join requests ▸ Settings ▸ Permissions ▸ Roles ▼ Information General information Directory Group subscriptions Content control Web view customi... Advanced	Delete group Caution: Deleting a group is permanent. To help us improve our service, please enter the reason you are removing your group, then click the "Delete this group" button to permanently delete your group. Delete this group
	Reset group Group types are pre-configured settings for your Google group and make configuring your group a little easier. You can always change the specific settings and enable additional features to match your needs. Select a type to get more information.