



Digital competences for women in rural areas to increase their entrepreneurial opportunities and employability.

Towards inclusion through entrepreneurship.

IO1 – TASK 3 BRIDGING THE GAP MOOC MODULE: ONLINE COLLABORATION

Organization: Emphasys Centre



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Key Symbols

Symbols	Explanation
	Definitions
	Additional Resources
	Tips
	Activities
	Reminder
	Video

Introduction to Online Collaboration

*Insert introductory video presenting the module

Overview of Online Collaboration

1.1 What is Online Collaboration?



Collaboration: The term collaboration can be defined in 9 simple words: Two or more people working together towards shared goals. Collaboration is a fundamental part of any working environment and it involves 3 main elements: a team, a process and a purpose (ThoughtFarmer, 2018). Essentially it is about working together with partners and customers as easily, as simply, and as effectively as possible. When it comes to business being able to communicate successfully is the biggest competitive advantage that you can have.



Source: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/marketing-man-people-woman-6476260/>



Online Collaboration: In this day and age, where technology has flourished and has become an integral part of everyone's lives majority of businesses and entrepreneurs have transitioned to online collaboration. Online collaboration can be defined as the process of connecting users digitally so they can communicate and work together in an online space (eztalks.com, n.d). It involves tools and platforms that users can use to communicate via audio, video or text at anytime even if they are not in the same space physically.

1.2. Types of online collaboration

Synchronous Online Collaboration

Synchronous online collaboration takes place when people work together online in **real-time** while they are either in the same room or at different locations (eztalks.com, n.d). For example, online collaboration tools and software like Google Docs can be used to allow two or more people to edit and write documents at the same time even if they are located on opposite sides of the world. In other cases, colleagues can use a video conferencing platform (e.g. Zoom), and brainstorm ideas via interactive whiteboards (e.g. Miro). Team communication tools (e.g. Slack) allow users to send instant messages to others privately or to different groups of people at once. In this way they can receive feedback or answers to certain questions instantly without having to communicate through email.



Source: <https://www.pexels.com/search/working%20remotely/>

Asynchronous Online Collaboration

Asynchronous online collaboration takes place when people work together on the same project **at different times**, whether they are in the same room or located in different places (eztalks.com, n.d). The most well-known form of asynchronous online collaboration tools is email. Digital calendars (e.g Google Calendar) are also considered tools for asynchronous online collaboration as they have features for managing and scheduling meetings, deadlines and other tasks. Additionally, online storage tools (e.g. Google Drive) enable asynchronous collaboration as one person can work on something in their own time and upload it on the storage tool when they are done, so another person can continue afterwards.

1.3 Importance of Online Collaboration for Business

Now that we have established the meaning and the difference between synchronous and asynchronous online collaboration, it is time to get an insight on its importance, and understand the ways in which it can be beneficial for your business.

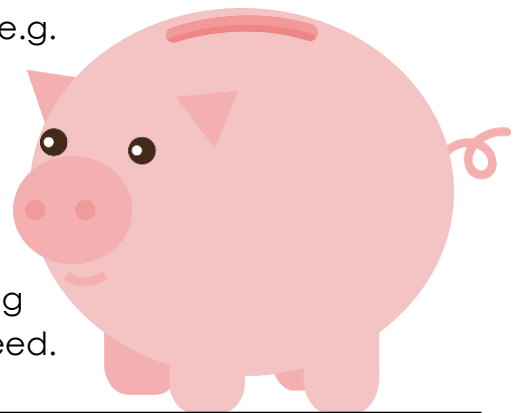
During the last decade and especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more people are choosing to work remotely. Entrepreneur's business activities are no longer confined to one office or building. Online collaboration has become the basis of entrepreneurial success (Gaurav Tiwari, 2021). The reason for this is that it brings about various business benefits in many different industries.

Let's have a closer look on the main advantages of Online collaboration:

Time and Cost Efficiency:

By using an online collaboration software (e.g. Google Docs), team members are able to work on the same document in real-time and provide feedback directly on the document without having to exchange numerous emails. Most online collaboration tools and software offer free versions or flexible pay-as you go licensing ensuring you only pay for the exact amount of users you need.

Moreover, by collaborating remotely businesses can save up on equipment, electricity and space (Kahootz, 2021). It is more convenient to organise meetings online via video conferencing tools especially if people live in different locations. Research shows that virtual meetings are more likely to start on time and that participants are more focused and do not waste time as they tend to do during face 2 face meetings (Arreola and Daems, 2021).



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-3718557/>

Productivity:



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-3078544/>

Online collaboration provides people with tools they need to work with others from any location, including from home and while travelling. It enables people to be productive when it best suits them (Kahootz, 2021). In addition, online collaboration tools automate tasks which make work processes more straight forward and save up time. In this way, you have more time to spend on more important activities and get to accomplish more during the day.

Security:

If you choose to keep all your documents and personal information within an online collaboration platform, then you do not have to worry if it is safe and secure. Majority of these platforms include firewalls, two-step authentication, encryptions, password protections to protect your data (Kahootz, 2021). However, being extra safe is always a good idea. Make a habit of keeping a backup copy of your documents on your device or on an external hard drive to eliminate any risks of losing your data.



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-3078544/>

Communication:



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-5187243/>

Through online collaboration, your business can become more connected than ever. Especially if you live in a rural area away from the city, you will be able to expand your network and business without having to leave your house. Even if that is not the case, online collaboration tools can help improve your team's communication skills as they minimize the risk of missing important updates or meetings and ensure that everything is organized and on track.

Audience:

By using the right online tools, you can reach your audience/clients way faster and cheaper. Instead of contacting them through phone calls, face-to-face meetings and paper surveys, you can simply contact them through email or social media, organize a virtual meeting or create an online survey through Google Forms.



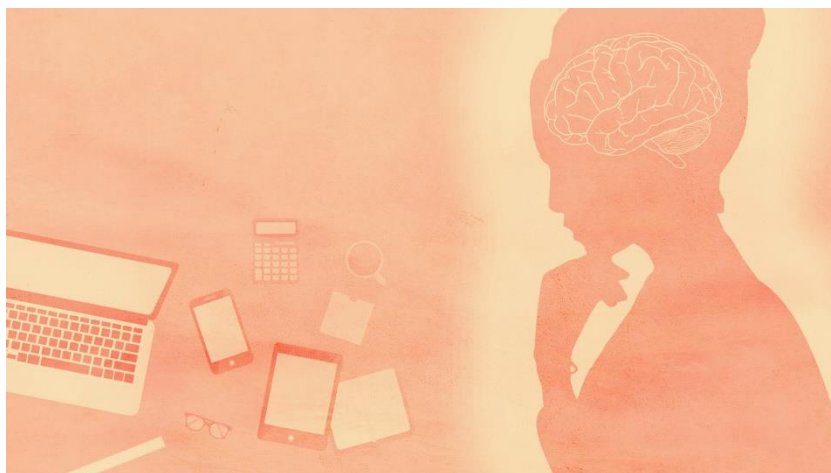
Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-563967/>

1.4 Online Collaboration Limitations:

It is undoubtable that online collaboration can bring about many benefits to a business, however, there are some limitations of online collaboration which are worth mentioning:

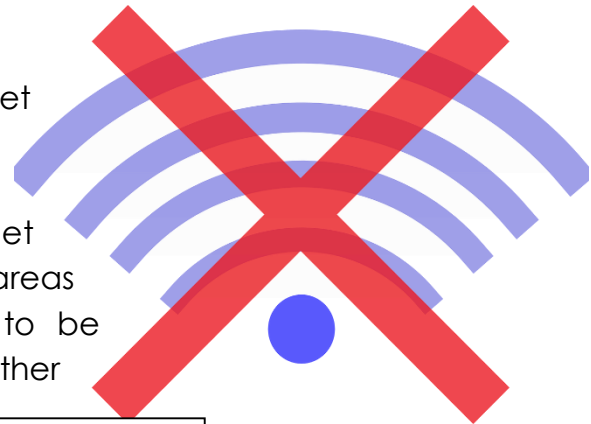
Lack of face-to-face interaction:

Although online collaboration tools provide real-time communication between people, they still lack the benefits of face-to-face interaction. Communication purely through the internet may cause feelings of disconnection to some people. A simple chitchat in the office kitchen or small talk you exchange with a customer creates a sense of connection that can be hard to establish online (Kissflow, 2021).



Network failure & equipment breakdown:

It is important to keep in mind that internet connection and technological devices have some limitations too. You can expect network failure or bad internet connectivity particularly if you live in rural areas away from big cities. Also, you need to be prepared in case your laptop or any other device you are working on breaks down. This is why it is crucial to save your work constantly while you are working online.



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-5658852/>

<https://pixabay.com/images/id-525700/>

1.6 Different types of Online collaboration tools/software

There are many tools that entrepreneurs can choose from to assist them with collaboration. Many might think that such tools are more or less the same, however, there are different categories of collaboration tools that accommodate different needs and offer different user experiences.

Whiteboards:

With collaborative whiteboards users can take turns and communicate via text, graphics and drawings. Interactive whiteboards also feature digital erasers. Whiteboards are a great tool for capturing ideas, co-creating, mind mapping and brainstorming.

Suggested Tools: [Miro](#) & [Padlet](#)

→ Free training sessions on how to use Miro: <https://academy.miro.com/>



[Getting Started with Miro](#)

[Padlet Tutorial - How to Get Started Guide](#)



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-4876666/>



File sharing tools:

File sharing tools enable you to exchange different types of files- such as text documents, PDFs, photos, videos etc. All the documents are saved into one shared storage space in order to avoid filling up your email with heavy files.

Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-303891/>

Suggested tool: [Google Drive](#)



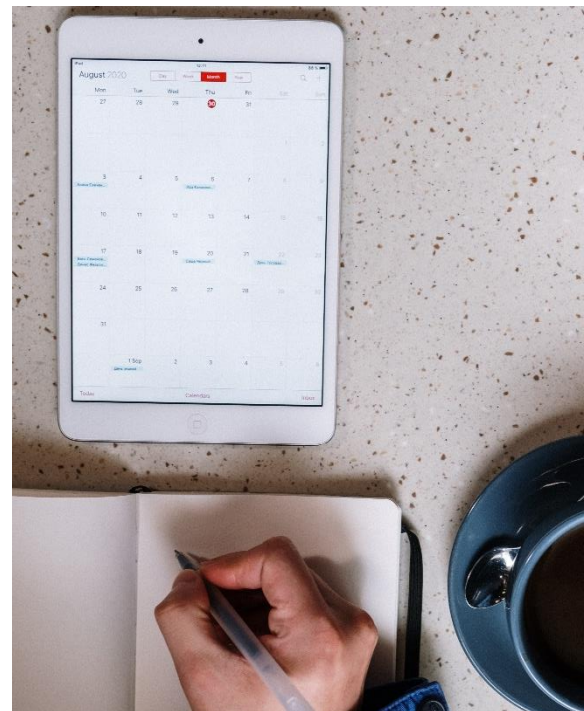
[How to Use Google Drive - Beginner's Guide](#)

Online calendar tools:

Online calendars enable users to organize meetings/appointments, schedule and edit events and sync the changes across devices without having to invite and inform other people separately. Some calendars even let you enhance your events with attachments, links and automated reminders.

Suggested tool: Google Calendar

- Check out p. 28-34 for more information and guidance about Google Calendar.



Source: [Pexels](#)

Instant messaging tools:

Instant messaging tools allow you to exchange text messages and online files in real time via your device. Most instant messaging and communication tools enable the exchange of photos and videos and even have a search feature that allows you to search for specific messages that were exchanged on the past.



Suggested tool: [Slack](#)



[How to use Slack](#)



[How to use Slack: your quick start guide](#)

Video-conferencing tools:

Video conferencing tools enable live communication through video. Instead of organizing a face-to-face meeting users across different locations can meet online and experience the “feeling” of seeing each other as they would if they were face-to-face.



Suggested tool: [Zoom](#)

[Microsoft Teams](#), [Webex](#)



[How to Use Zoom - Free Video Conferencing & Virtual Meetings:](#)



[Get started with Microsoft Teams](#)

Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-5395416/>

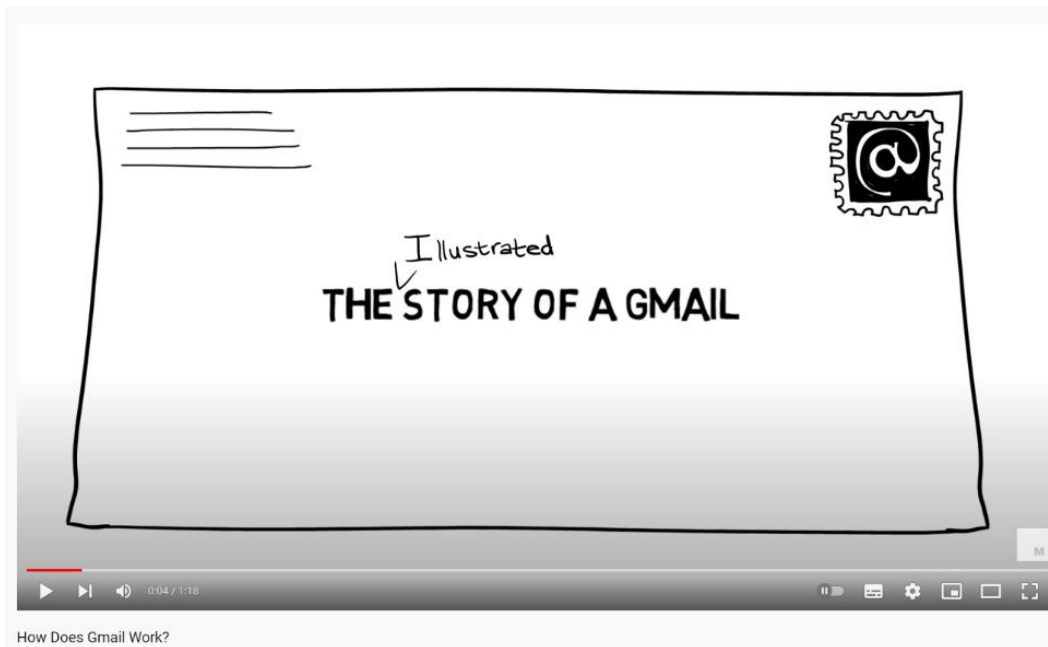
Online Collaboration tools for women entrepreneurs

2. Online Collaboration tools: Gmail

2.1 Gmail Definition & Statistics



Watch [this video](#) to get an idea of how Gmail works:



Gmail: a free email service developed by Google. To access Gmail, you need to connect with your Google account. A Google email account is an account that ends with @gmail.com for example: bridgingthegapeuproject@gmail.com

Gmail Statistics (Petrov, 2021):

- Gmail is the most popular email platform with over 1.8 billion users worldwide.
- Gmail holds a 53% share of the US email market (2020).
- Gmail is available in 72 languages.
- 61% of 18-29-year-olds use Gmail.
- 92% of US startups use Gmail.



2.2 Reasons to choose Gmail for your Business:¹

→ Its Affordable:



To begin with, standard Gmail is completely free. If you wish to add extra business features, such as more cloud storage, via Google Suite you can do so with only 5 euros per month.

→ Its Reliable:

As long as you have an internet connection you can be sure you will have access to your Gmail account. As is it part of the Google family it offers 99.978% availability and almost no scheduled downtime. In other words, it is extremely rare for Google to breakdown or have any accessibility issues.



¹ All icons of this section have been retrieved from: <https://www.flaticon.com/>

→ **Storage & Security:**



Standard Gmail offers up to 7GB per user, so exceeding your storage limit should not be a problem. If that is not enough for you then Gmail for business has you covered as it offers 25BG of storage space per user. In addition, all your data will be backed up on Google's servers. This means that you will access your data over a secured encrypted connection therefore nobody will be able to access them.

→ **Personalized domain:**



Gmail enables you to personalize your domain name. For example, if your company's name is Emphasys, then you can create a Gmail address that looks like this: information@bridgingthegap.com. This looks more professional and will make a better impression to your clients. Another plus is that Gmail allows you to keep your domain name if you decide to leave and move to a different email provider. In addition, Gmail allows you to create a signature for your emails. This saves up time while writing up emails. Find out how to create your Gmail signature [here](#).

→ **Instant Chat and Video Conferencing**

If you choose to use Gmail for business, then you can also enjoy the benefits of the instant messaging chat and the video conferencing feature to instantly get in touch with colleagues or clients.



→ **Easy search and organization**



Gmail provides users with a search engine that quickly scans through all your emails and finds the information that you are looking for. Additionally, it allows you to add other email accounts that you may have (e.g. Hotmail), so you can manage all your emails from one account. Filtering and labeling email conversations is also possible.



Additional resources:

- 18 Reasons Every Company Should Use Gmail:
<https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/18-reasons-use-gmail/>
- The advantages of using google mail for your business email:
<http://junctureit.com.au/the-advantages-of-using-google-mail-for-your-business-email/>

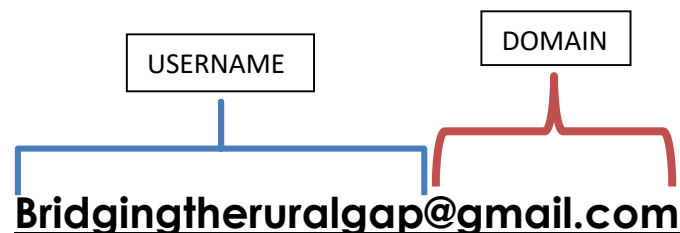
2.3 Gmail: Useful terms



Let's have a look at the most basic and most used terms related to Gmail:

Username: Think about username as the unique identification of your account on a particular server. It is impossible for two accounts to have the same username.

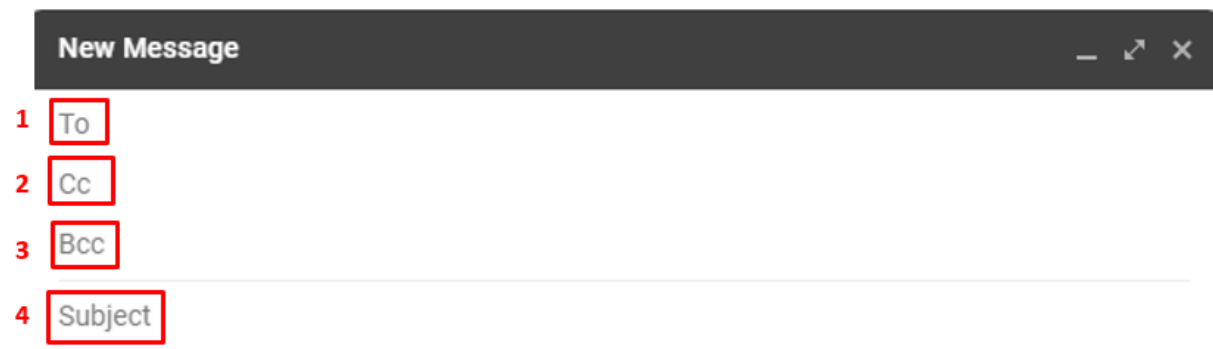
Domain name: Domain is the part of an email address that comes after the @ symbol. For example, @gmail.com, @yahoo.com, @outlook.com, @hotmail.com etc.



Attachment: Any type of file sent along with an email message. Attachments can include anything from photos and documents to zipped files, folders, mp3s, and more.

Spam: Spam email is an unwanted email and it can include malicious links. Often, spam e-mail is sent for commercial purposes such as advertisements, newsletters etc.

Emails Address Fields:



The image shows a screenshot of an email client's 'New Message' window. The window has a dark header bar with the text 'New Message' and standard window controls (minimize, maximize, close). Below the header, there are four input fields, each preceded by a red number and a red box highlighting the field label: 1 To, 2 Cc, 3 Bcc, and 4 Subject. The fields are arranged vertically, with 'To' at the top, followed by 'Cc', 'Bcc', and 'Subject' at the bottom.

To: here is where you insert the primary recipient. Put the email address here if the message is for this recipient's action and attention only. This line is visible to all other recipients (Cc, and Bcc) by default.

CC: is short for Carbon Copy. Here you should insert additional recipients in additions to those inserted in the "To" field. The primary recipient/s will be able to see the recipients added in CC.

BCC: is short for Blind Carbon Copy. The recipients added here will not be visible to the recipients in fields "To" and "CC". Keep in mind that you should be careful with the use of blind copies as sending multiple copies of the same message can lead to the message being received in the Spam folder.

Subject: Think about this section as a title/small description for your email. Try to write concise and informative subjects for your emails that will motivate the receivers to open it.

2.4 How to create a Gmail account

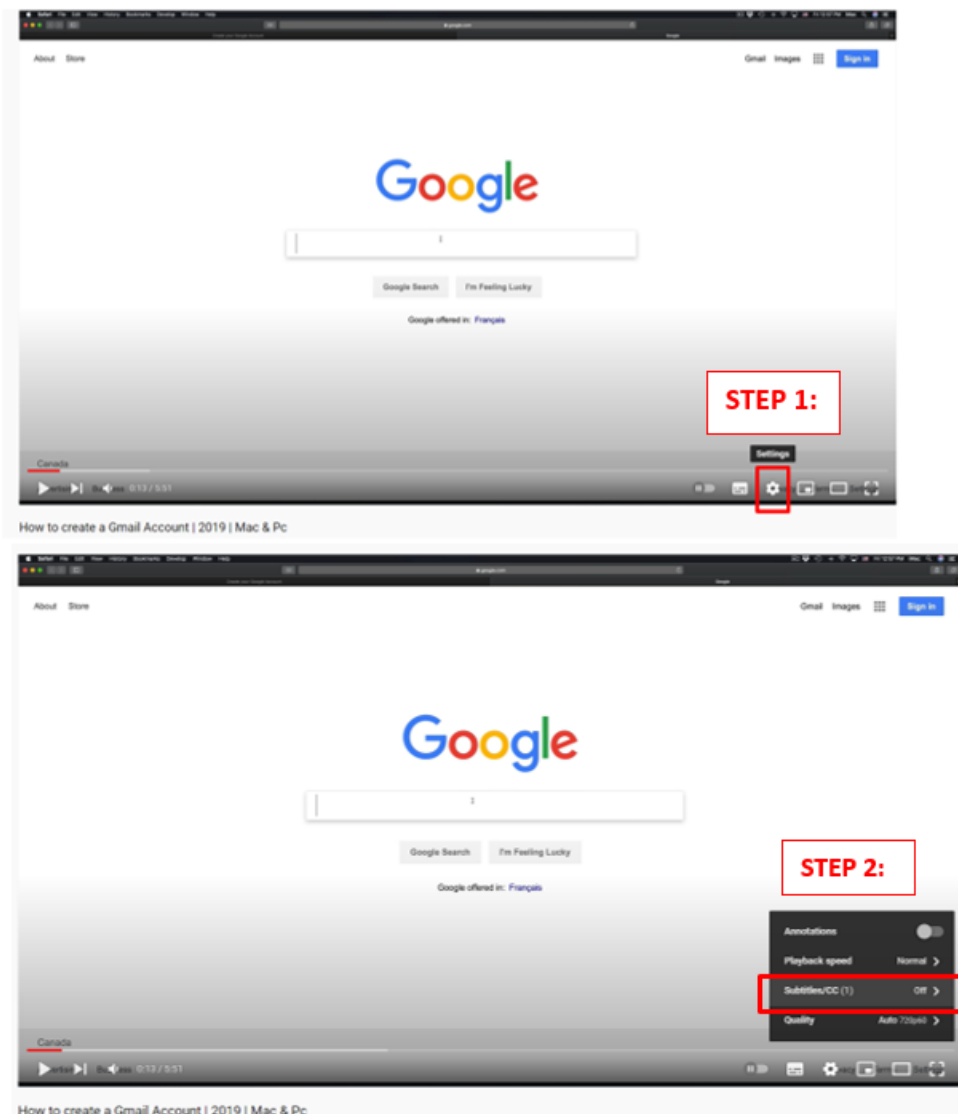
In order to complete the rest of this module you will have to watch videos on YouTube. The next section is a step by step guide on how to choose subtitles on YouTube.



How to insert subtitles on YouTube videos:

Step 1: Click on the settings button on the bottom right-hand side of the video

Step 2: Click on the Subtitles option

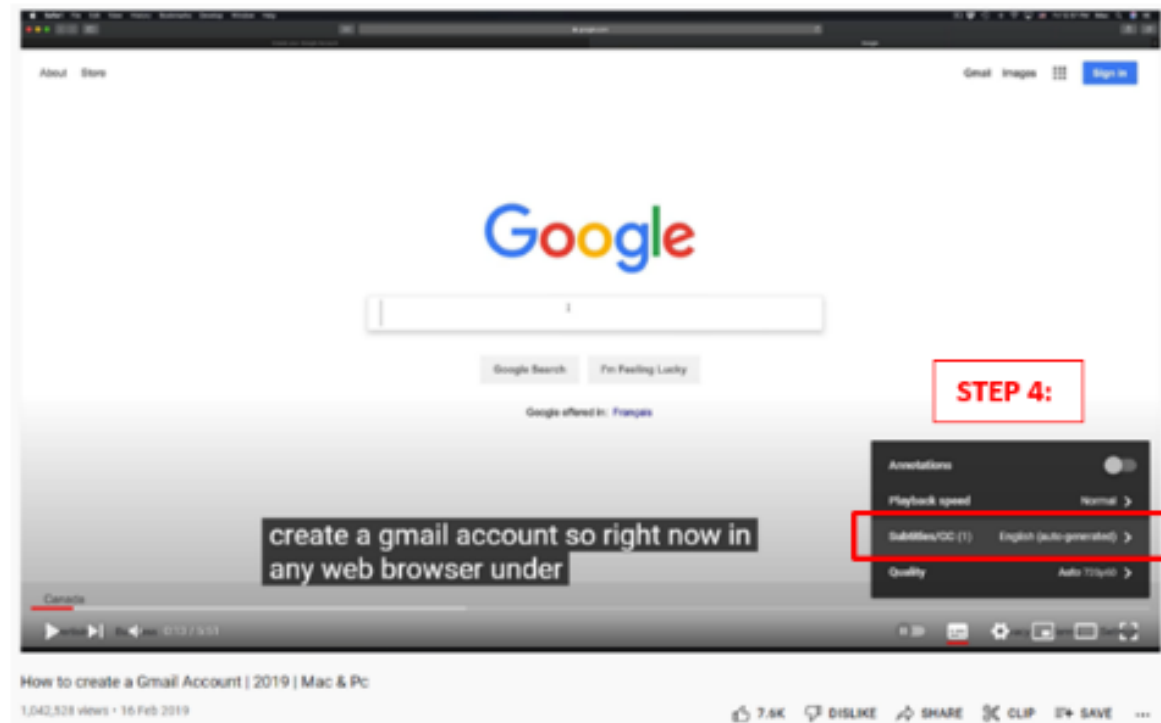


Step 3: Choose English (auto-generated)

Step 4: If you want a different language click on Subtitles again



How to create a Gmail Account | 2019 | Mac & Pc



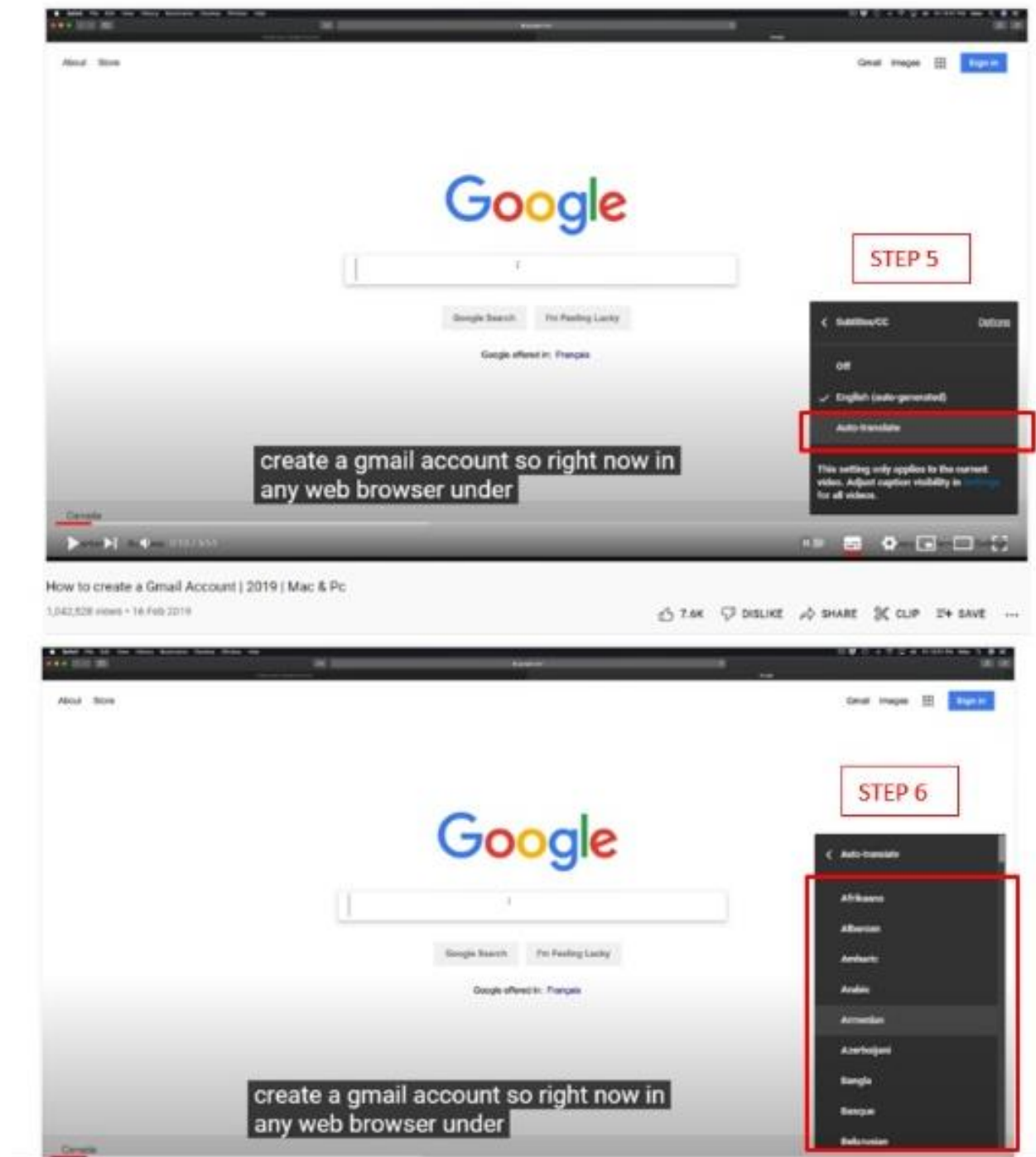
How to create a Gmail Account | 2019 | Mac & Pc

1,042,528 views • 16 Feb 2019

7.6K DISLIKE SHARE CLIP SAVE ...

Step 5: Click on Auto translate.

Step 6: Choose and click on the language that you want.



Activity: 20 min

Watch [this video](#) and follow the steps to create a Gmail account:

OR use [this](#) resource

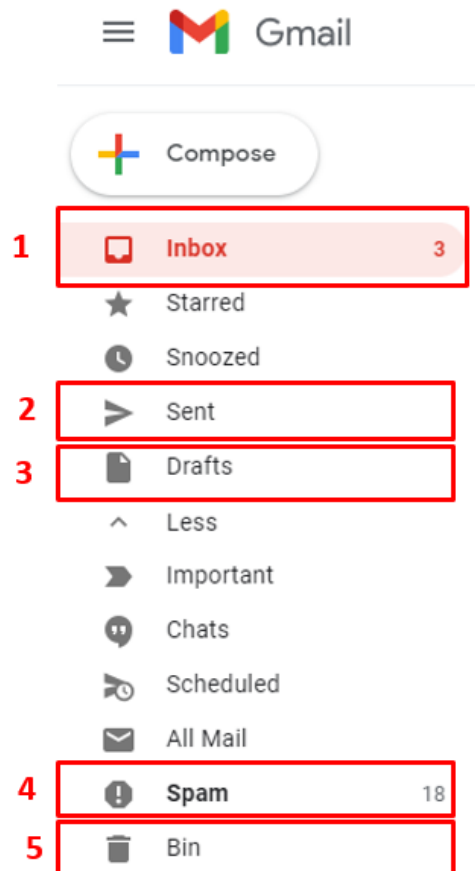
2.5 How to change your Gmail theme:

**Activity 10 min**

Watch [this video](#) and follow the steps to change your Gmail theme

Or use [this](#) resource

2.6 Gmail folders:



1. The Inbox folder is the main folder in which the emails you receive are stored.

2. The Sent folder: stores mails that were successfully sent to recipients.

3. The Draft folder: stores mails that you have composed but have not yet sent to any recipients.

4. The Spam folder: contains spam emails that you receive from unwanted or suspicious email addresses.

5. The Bin folder: stores emails that you have deleted for 30 days.

2.7 How to compose, reply and forward emails



Activity: 30 min



Watch [this video](#) and then follow the steps to compose and send an email. Before you send your email make sure you set up your signature as shown in the video.



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-2794680/>



Activity: 15 min



Watch [this video](#) and then follow the steps on how to reply to an email on your laptop. Next follow the same procedure and reply to an email by using your phone.



Activity: 15 min



Watch [this video](#) and then follow the steps on how to forward an email on your laptop. Next follow the same procedure and forward an email with your phone.

2.8 Extra features and Tips for Gmail

How to use the Undo Send feature:

What happens if you send an email containing confidential information to the wrong client? Or if you forget to include important information or make grammar or spelling mistakes that can affect your business reputation? Gmail is here to save the day as it offers an Undo Send feature that allows you to unsend an email within 30 seconds after you click the send button.



Activity: 15 min



Watch [this video](#) to learn how to use the unsend feature on Gmail. Next, compose an email and follow the steps to send it and unsend it.

Or use [this](#) resource.



How to schedule an email:

Gmail also allows you to schedule emails and send them at any time and date you wish. An additional benefit of this feature is that after you schedule an email you can go back and edit it and reschedule it for a different time.

Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-2389150/>



Activity: 15 min



Watch [this video](#) to find out how to schedule an email on Gmail. Then follow the steps and schedule some emails for the future.

Or use [this](#) resource.

How to create automatic Vacation Replies:

With Gmail it is easy and quick to prepare an automatic reply email for when you are out of office to inform your colleagues/clients.



Here are some examples you can use for your automatic reply email:

- *Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, I am currently out of office, with no email access. I will respond to your email when I get back on (insert date).*
- *Thank you for emailing (your company's name). We will respond within (number) working days.*

If you will be away for a long period of time you can also include one of your colleague's emails in your automatic reply:

- *Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, I am currently out of office, with no email access. I will respond to your email when I get back on (insert date). If the matter is urgent please contact my colleague (name) at (email address).*



Activity: 20 min



Watch [this video](#) and follow the steps to create an automatic vacation reply on Gmail

Or use [this](#) resource.



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-97621/>



After you master all the basic functions of Gmail you can have a look at [this resource](#) and find out how to use more advances Gmail setting for your business.

3 Online Collaboration tools: Google Calendar

3.1 Overview of Google Calendar

What is Google Calendar?



Google Calendar is a time management and scheduling tool developed by Google. It enables you to schedule appointments, organize your daily tasks, and set reminders (Martins Ferreira, 2020). It is one of the easiest and simplest digital calendars out there, and it is ideal for entrepreneurs who have multiple things to do every day and need constant reminders.

Google Calendar features/ advantages:

You can:

- ✓ Set reminders for events, appointments or meetings
- ✓ Share your calendar with others
- ✓ Access google calendar on any device, Android or iOS
- ✓ Browse calendars of interest that include regional public holidays in different countries, religious holidays etc., and sync them with your own calendar.
- ✓ Schedule virtual meetings with other staff members or clients
- ✓ Embed google calendar to your website so that clients or business partners can reach you remotely via video links.

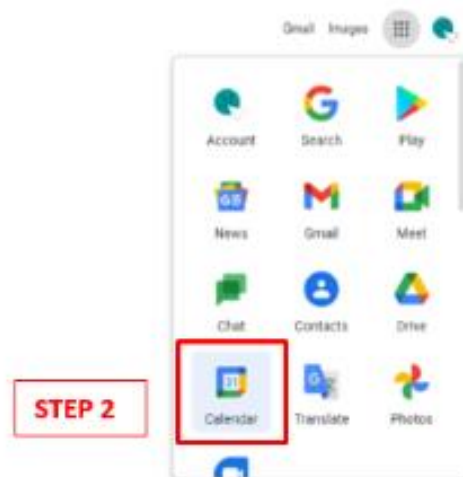


Source: [Flaticon](https://flaticon.com/google-calendar)

3.2 Sign in to Google Calendar

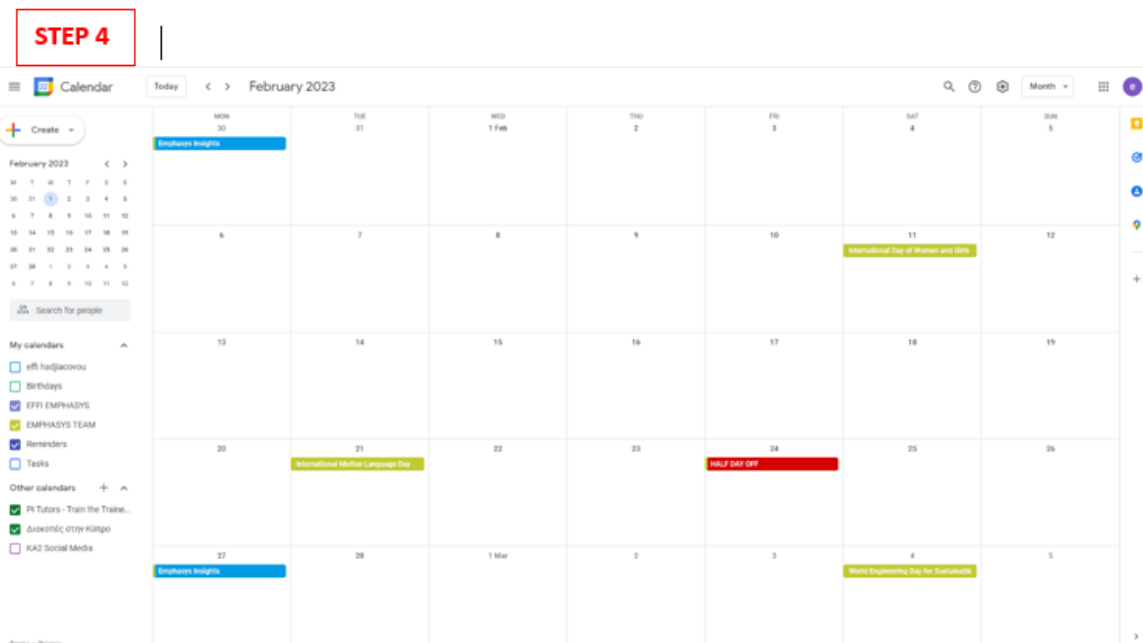
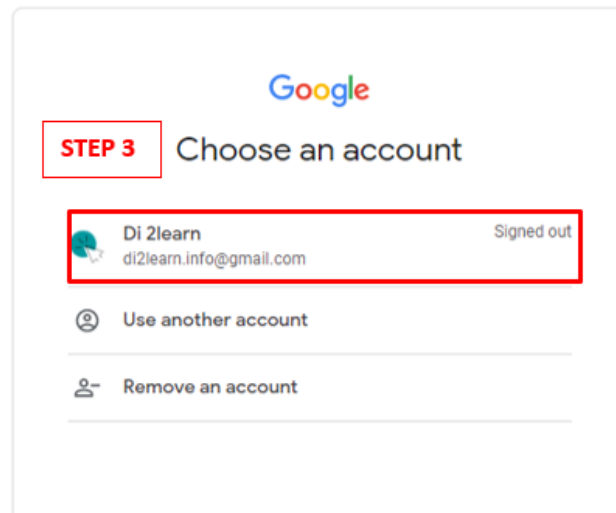
Step 1: Open your Google Chrome browser and click on the google apps button on the top right-hand side.

Step 2: Click on the Google Calendar button.



Step 3: If you are not already signed into your google account then you will have to do so.

Step 4: Once you enter your Gmail and your password you will have gain access to your Google calendar.



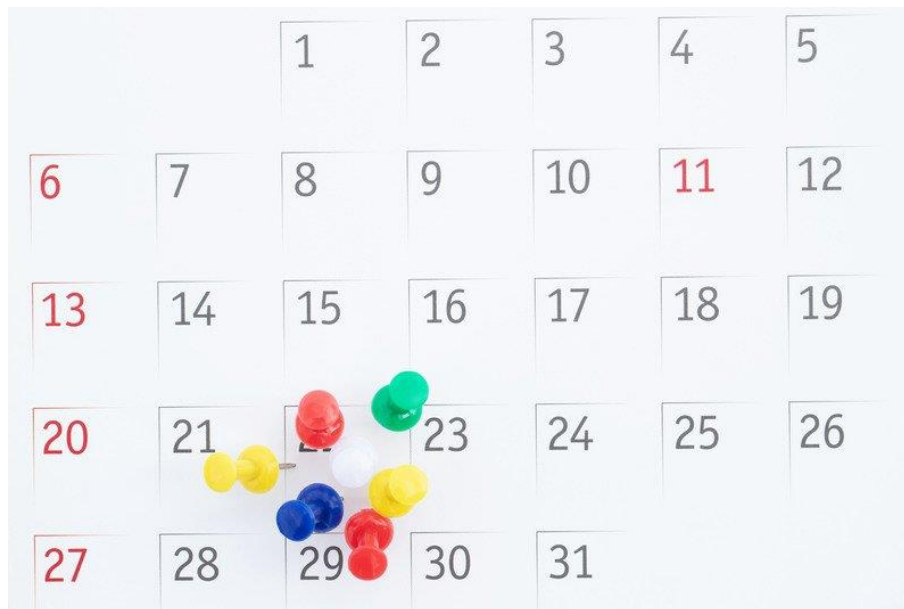


Activity: 5 min

Follow the instructions above and sign into Google Calendar.

3.3 How to browse and sync Calendars of Interest

Google Calendar allows you to sync your calendar with other calendars that include public national holidays in different countries, religious holidays, sport events and even phases of the moon.



Source: <https://www.canva.com/media/MAEBcuNBTJM>

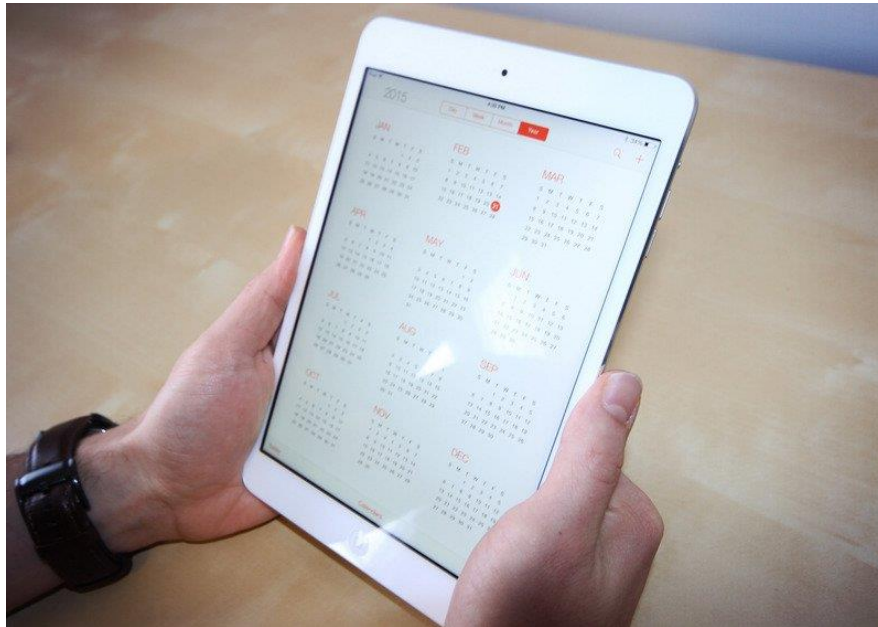


Activity: 15 min



Watch [this video](#) and then browse the different calendars of interest and sync your calendar with the ones that interest you.

3.4 How to create an event on Google Calendar



Source: <https://www.canva.com/media/MAEGHeqDE8I>

Activity: 30 min



Watch [this video](#) or use [this resource](#) and follow the steps to create your first event on Google Calendar. Here are the details of the event:

- Date: 23rd May
- Staff meeting about summer holidays
- 10:00-12:00 o'clock
- Online via zoom: Insert a link for the meeting in the description

Now add another event. Details:

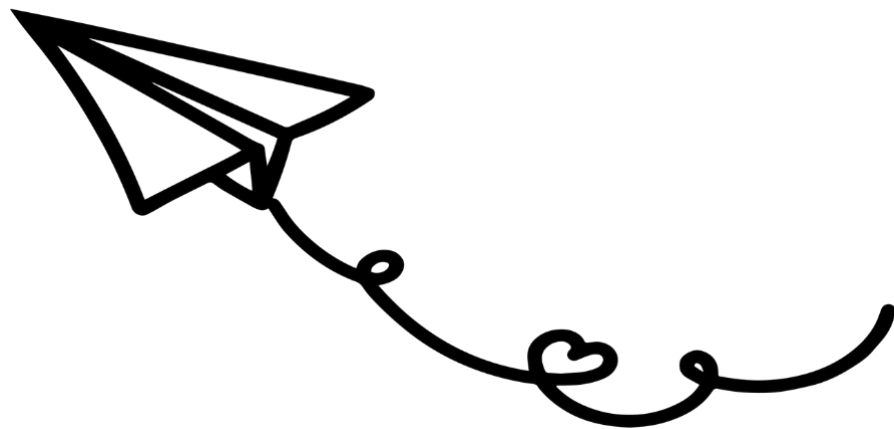
- Date: 10th- 13th April
- Digital skills training sessions
- 9:30- 14:15
- Location: Emphasys Centre, Nicosia Cyprus
- Description: Digital skills training event to upgrade digital, entrepreneurial and creativity skills, in order to improve personal and professional skills and become active citizens.

3.5 How to invite other people to your calendar event

Activity 15 min



Watch [this video](#) or use [this resource](#) and follow the steps to invite one or more of your contacts to your Digital Skills training event.



Source: <https://pixabay.com/images/id-5293458/>

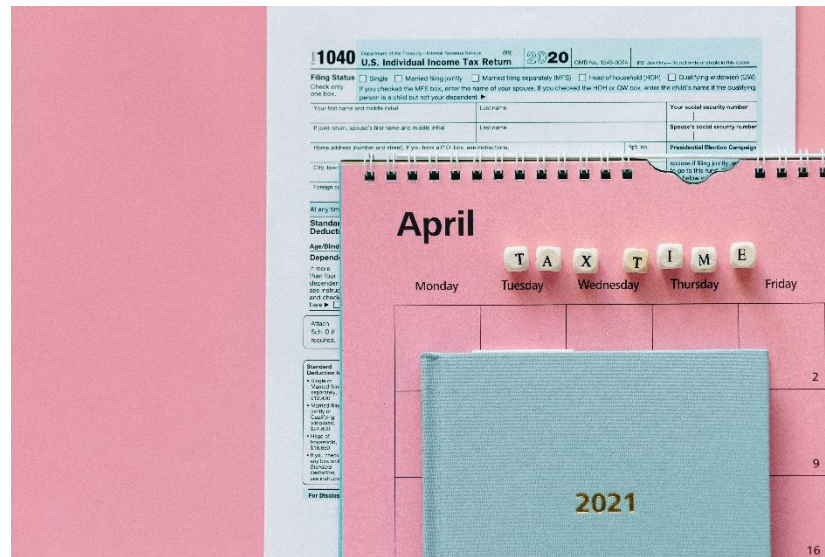


Remember: To edit an existing event, you simply click on it and then click on the **Edit Event** button.



If you want to delete an event on Google calendar you simply need to right click on it and then click on DELETE.

3.6 How to share your calendar with others



Source: [Pexels](#)

Activity: 30 min



Watch [this video](#) or use [this resource](#) to learn about the ways you can share your calendar with others. Next follow the steps and share your calendar in the 3 different ways that are presented: 1. With specific people, 2. With a team, 3. Publicly.



For more advanced tricks regarding Gmail & Google Calendar check out [this website](#).

4. Netiquette for effective Online Collaboration

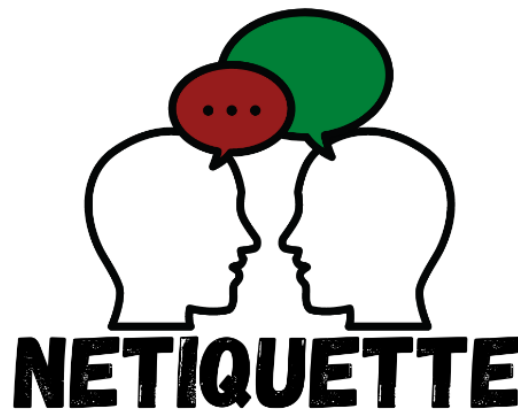
4.1 What is netiquette?



Netiquette: The term netiquette derives from the words “network” and “etiquette”. It refers to the unspoken rules required for communicating and collaborating efficiently online. Just like traditional etiquette, netiquette includes rules of conduct for social interactions in order to maintain a pleasant, comfortable and efficient online environment without conflict among users (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

Why is it so important for your business?

Why is netiquette important for your business? If you think about it netiquette is as crucial as basic etiquette. If most of your work is done online, then it can be even more important than basic etiquette. You must remember that anything you send or post online makes up your digital footprint. Think about your digital footprint as a record of your online activity which includes all the data you have shared, the places you have been and all the traces you left behind (Protection, 2021). One badly-written post on your company's social media, or a miscalculated email sent to an important stakeholder or client could destroy your company's reputation (Brennan, 2021).



It is essential to become aware of how our online behaviour can impact us and others. Nonverbal communication accounts for 80% of how communication is interpreted. Since face expressions and body language are very limited or non-existent online, comments and statements that we make can easily be misinterpreted (Consador, 2019).



4.2 Netiquette tips

- ✓ Always maintain a friendly and respectful tone in written messages. Keep in mind that your tone can be easily misunderstood. Always assume good intentions and ask questions for clarity.
- ✓ NEVER USE CAPITALS LIKE THIS as in written online language this can be viewed as shouting.
- ✓ While you are collaborating online try to be even more polite than you would be in person. It's quite easy for misunderstandings to develop online because you aren't able to use tone of voice (audio) or facial expression (video).
- ✓ Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm. Take into consideration intercultural sensitivity.
- ✓ Make sure you keep any online discussions or exchanges confidential.
- ✓ Reread your written text before posting or emailing and check for grammar and spelling mistakes.
- ✓ Wait 24 hours before responding to a provocative message or post. Try and give the person who wrote it the benefit of the doubt and respond as positively as possible.
- ✓ When you attend an online meeting make sure that you are in a quiet place with no distractions or noise. Also make sure to mute yourself when you are not speaking in order to reduce background noise.
- ✓ Make sure you raise your virtual hand when you want to speak and make use of the chat if you have questions or want to provide feedback.
- ✓ Join online meetings 5 minutes earlier to ensure you have access and resolve any technical issues.
- ✓ Be careful on how you use emojis. Read this article for more guidance: [The Business Etiquette Guide To Emojis](#)



Remember: Be careful of what you say or write as it can be easily forwarded to others.

Conclusion

Through this module we have gained a clear understanding of online collaboration, the two main types (synchronous & asynchronous, its advantages for entrepreneurs and business owners as well as the limitations it can impose.

In addition, this module also presented the different categories of online collaboration tools that women entrepreneurs can take advantage of to brainstorm, share files, organize tasks and communicate virtually. The module suggests specific tools and provides step by step guides and videos for implementation.

After covering the use of online collaboration tools/software, the last topic of the module focuses on the importance of netiquette and includes tips on how to communicate and collaborate effectively online.

To sum up, in today's digital era, online collaboration is extremely important and beneficial especially for entrepreneurs and small business that want to expand their companies. Make sure to take advantage of the guides and tips in this module and make use of the right online collaboration tools for your business.

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Quiz

1. Synchronous online collaboration takes place when people work together on the same project at different times, whether they are in the same room or located in different places
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Which of the following are types of online collaboration tools?
 - a. Digital calendars
 - b. Video- conferencing tools
 - c. Whiteboards
 - d. Instant messaging tools
 - e. All the above
3. Miro is a tool that allows you to digitally brainstorm with sticky notes.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Which of the following is an instant messaging collaboration tool?
 - a. Zoom
 - b. Slack
 - c. Miro
 - d. Google drive
5. The field BCC on Gmail is short for Blind Carbon Copy. Here you should insert additional recipients in additions to those inserted in the "To" field. The primary recipient/s will be able to see the recipients added in CC.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. The Bin folder on Gmail stores mails that you have composed but have not yet sent to any recipients.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. The Undo Send feature on Gmail allows you to unsend an email within
 - a. 30 seconds after you click the send button
 - b. 60 seconds after you click the send button
 - c. 1 hour after you click the send button
8. What can you do on Google Calendar?

- a. Set reminders for events, appointments or meetings
 - b. Share your calendar with others
 - c. Browse calendars of interest that include regional public holidays in different countries, religious holidays etc., and sync them with your own calendar.
 - d. Schedule virtual meetings with other staff members or clients
 - e. All the above
9. Netiquette derives from the words “network” and “etiquette” and refers to the unspoken rules required for communicating and collaborating efficiently online.
- a. True
 - b. False
10. Communicating online by using CAPITAL LETTERS LIKE THIS is acceptable.
- a. True
 - b. False