Google+ Communities
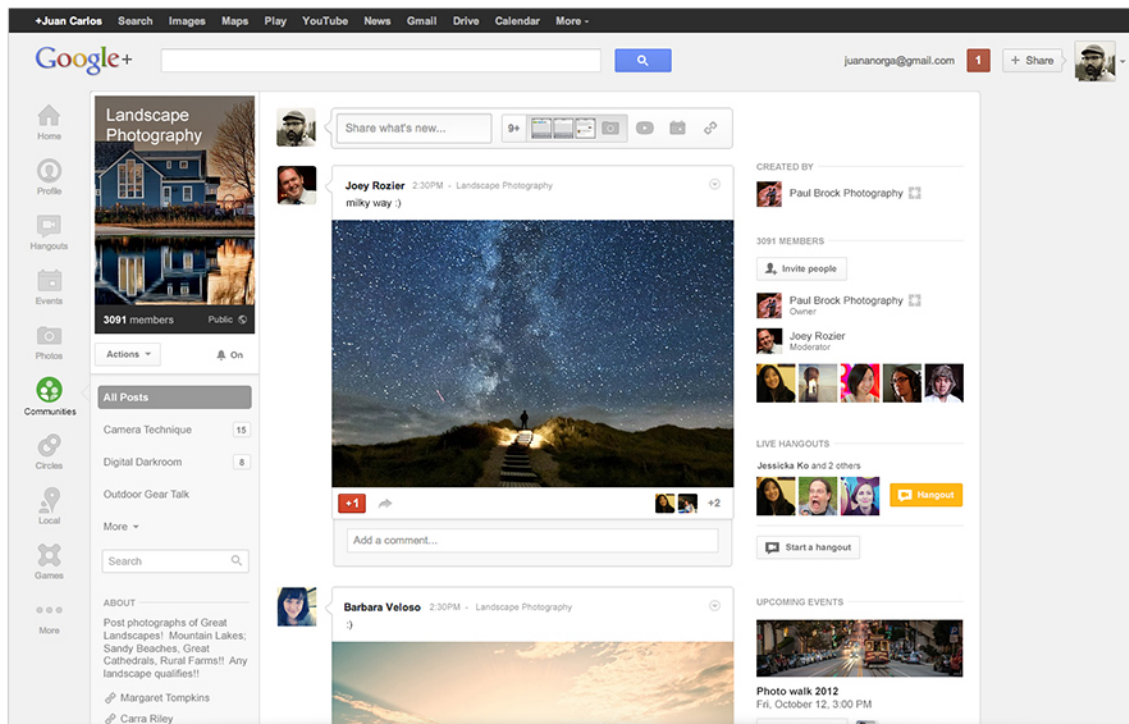
Getting Started with Google+ Communities

Introducing Google+ Communities

Google+ Communities are places where people can get together and talk about the stuff they're into. With Google+ Communities, you can create a space for your fans and followers to engage more deeply with each other on Google+.

With Google+ Communities, you can:

Bring people together
around a shared passion by creating a community

Example: If you're a local athletic apparel company, you can create a community for female distance runners to exchange tips, find out about upcoming races, share running trails, and find training partners.

Increase awareness
by joining and participating in communities whose members would be interested in you and the content you share

Example: If you're a sustainable restaurant, you can broaden your fan base by joining communities for green-minded individuals and answering questions about sustainable agriculture, sharing recipes, and inviting people to tour nearby farms.

Listen and learn
from your followers by keeping up with community discussions

Example: If you're an up-and-coming band, you might discover venues where similar bands have played in the past by spending time in music-oriented communities, and then use this information to help plan your tour.

Google+ Communities

Google+ pages and communities work together

Your page is where people can find you on Google+ and a place for you to share updates to your followers. Communities extend the conversation, making it easy for your fans to start discussions with each other about topics related to your page and what you do.

As a Google+ page:

• You can create and moderate communities
• You can be invited to and join other communities
• You can comment, +1, post, and create hangouts and events in any community you join
• The communities you own will be featured on the right-hand side of your page
• Your page will be featured on the right-hand side of communities you create.

Creating the right community

You can create four different types of communities:

Community type	Who can join	Who can see members and posts	Who can find your community	Best for...
Public - Anyone can join	Everyone	Everyone	Everyone	Bringing people together on Google+ around a shared interest. Examples: Black and White Photography, 49ers Football Fans, The Hobbit Fan Club
Public - Moderator approval needed to join	Anyone can request to join, but moderators need to approve membership	Everyone	Everyone	Sharing content publicly, but limiting who can create it. Examples: Habitat for Humanity San Francisco, OSU Alumni, Noe Valley Neighborhood Businesses
Private - Let people find through search and request to join	Anyone can request to join, but moderators need to approve membership	Only members	Everyone	Creating closed communities for specific, publicly-known organizations. Examples: Williams High School Jazz Band, Cedar Oaks Parent Teacher Association
Private - Hide community from searches	Only invited people	Only members	Not shown in search results*	Small groups to have deep discussions and organize meet-ups. Examples: Johnson family, ECON101 study group, Moss Dorm Floor 3, Friday night movie club

*Note: The name and photo of a private community that's hidden from search will still be visible to people who type in or directly visit the community's web address.

You can't change the community type once your community has been created. When creating your community, think carefully about how people will use it and what type of content will be shared.

Setting up your community

Here are some tips to help you get your community ready:

Name   Pick a unique name that clearly communicates the purpose of your community, differentiates itself from similar communities, and differs from your Google+ page name to avoid confusion.

Photo   Pick a photo that captures the spirit of your community and makes a good impression.

Tagline   Keep your tagline clear and descriptive to attract the right members.

About   This section is where new members learn about your community so use this opportunity to:

1. Describe the purpose of your community.
2. Set clear expectations around posts and discussions.
3. Add any additional information or relevant links.

Adding discussion categories

Categories play an important role in your community's success. They guide discussions, give people an idea of what your community is about, and help members find the topics they're most interested in.

For example, if you're setting up a community for fans of a local rock band, you might have categories like Upcoming Shows, Fan Reviews, Album Releases, Favorite Songs and Q&A.

Categories can be added, renamed, reordered and even deleted easily, so don't worry about choosing the perfect categories right out of the gate. Instead, make sure your community's categories are kept up-to-date.
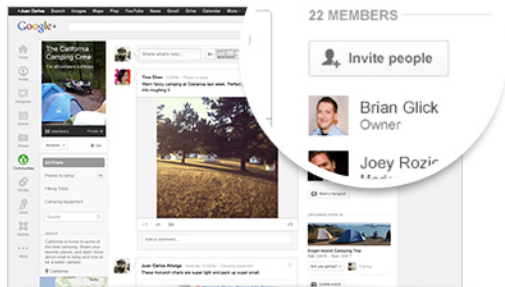
Promoting your community

Once you have created your community, make sure people know about it! Start by inviting the people on Google+ who you know will want to be involved.

Here are some additional ways to spread the word:

• Share your community publicly from your profile or Google+ page.
 Select 'Share this community' from the 'Actions' menu located under your
 community's photo.
• Share your community on other social networks.
• Send out emails announcing your community.
• Promote the community on your blog and include a link.
• Link to your community from your website.

The communities you've created will be highlighted on your Google+ page, and will also be discoverable in Google+ search results.

Posting to your community

Your community should be a place where your members feel comfortable starting their own conversations. Your posts—whether questions, topics, photos or videos—should encourage discussion and sharing of ideas. Unlike your Google+ page and profile, your community is not a place to simply broadcast information.

If you find that you're doing all the posting, think of ways to encourage members to post more. A great way to do this is by making your most active community members moderators and getting them involved in managing and posting content.

Managing posts and members

You and your community's moderators can:
Remove posts made by members
Remove members from the community
Ban members from the community

To minimize how actively you need to manage your community, make sure to have multiple moderators, select good discussion categories, and set expectations for your community in your 'About' section and in your initial posts.

Tips for a successful community

Do's

• Promote your community as a place where people can have conversations and share ideas
• Participate in conversations by posting, leaving comments, and +1'ing posts
• Celebrate and engage with your most active fans
• Add moderators and invite them to manage content and share regularly
• Add categories to help guide discussions

Dont's

• Don't just broadcast information - that's what your Google+ page is for
• Only pose broad questions in hopes of discussion and engagement
• Just repost the same content as your Google+ page
• Invite people to join an empty community -- write an initial post to set expectations and welcome new members
• Leave your community unmoderated -- check in daily on your community to make sure the right kinds of conversations are happening