Google Hangouts User Guide
MLA Technology Committee, January 2018

This is a guide for people who want to hold, or attend, a work related meeting via Google Hangouts.

Google Hangouts is a communications platform, incorporating video call, chat, and screen sharing, that is optimized for desktop/laptop computers using the Chrome browser. (The Google Hangouts apps for tablets and smart phones are not integrated with chat and screen sharing apps, so these devices are currently inferior platforms for work related meetings via Hangout.)

Prerequisites

1. Gmail Account.

2. Equipment: Desktop or Laptop computer with the following peripheral equipment:
   - Speakers: speakers or headphones.
   - Camera: external webcam for a desktop, or built-in webcam on a laptop.
   - Mic: external webcam with mic, built-in mic (laptops) or, standalone mic.
   - (Optional) Video Projection: Depending on the room size, and number of people present, you may want large screen projection and loudspeakers.

   *Note 1: The camera is not absolutely necessary, but the mic and speakers/headphones are.*

3. High-speed internet access.

4. Chrome. Google Hangouts is optimized for Google’s Chrome browser.

How to schedule a Hangout.

For any event you enter into Google Calendar you can set up a video call/Hangout, and invite guests via an email invitation, to which they can reply “Yes,” “Maybe,” or “No.” The Calendar event and the invitation include a link to a Hangout. This is the recommended way to schedule a meeting that includes a Hangout because it efficiently coordinates the attendees (Calendar is just sending an email announcing the date/time of a meeting to a group of people), it allows you to update the guest list at any time, and it generates a persistent link to the Hangout, so you don’t have to worry about whether anyone on the guest list has access to the Hangout. Also, with everyone’s having the Hangout invitation in advance, they can begin joining the meeting 15. 20, 30 minutes before the meeting, and they can advise each other about technical issues (“I can’t hear you.” “Can you hear me now?”), which lightens the tech support burden for the meeting planner/host.

1. Start a Calendar entry in the Google Calendar of the Gmail account you will be using for the Hangout.
2. Choose Add video call.
3. Use Add: Guests to enter the Gmail addresses of the people you will invite to the meeting.
4. Click SAVE, and Send invitations to invite your “Guests.”

(Illustrations on next page.)
The addresses you add to the guest list will receive an email invitation.

- The **invitation** will contain:
  - RSVP links (Yes, Maybe, No) – you receive a notice whichever they choose.
  - A link to join the video call – which they can use whether they reply, or not.
  - If the recipients click **Yes** to the invitation, an entry for the event will be added to their Google Calendar.

- If the invitation goes to a non-Gmail, or non-G Suite address, the invitee will be prompted to sign into Gmail in order to access the Hangout.

- The **video call link** will be active as soon as you click SAVE. You can use the link to practice joining/leaving, muting, etc., with people you have invited to the meeting who do not have Hangouts experience.

### How to join the Hangout

**Hangouts Tip 1:** Use Chrome as your browser.

**Hangouts Tip 2:** The first time a computer is used for a Hangout, the user must allow Google to install plugins.

- **If you scheduled the meeting**, go to Calendar, click on the event, then click on **Join meeting**.

- **If you were invited to the meeting**, open the email **invitation**, or go to Google Calendar, and click on the link to join the video call.

### Invitation view

![Invitation view](image-url)
**Hangouts main menu**

Left to right the icons mean: *Invite* other people, *Microphone mute*, *Camera mute*, adjust *Bandwidth*, *Settings*, *Hang up*.

- During the meeting engage *Microphone mute* when you are not speaking to avoid broadcasting background noise from your desk while people at other locations are speaking. The icon will turn *red* when it is engaged.

- Engage *Camera mute* and *Microphone mute* when you don’t want to be seen and heard (e.g., when you are talking with someone at your desk before the meeting begins).

- Use *Settings* to troubleshoot mic and audio problems.

- Most people will never use the *Adjust Bandwidth* option.
How to leave a Hangout

Move your cursor toward the middle of the top of your Hangout window. Click on the **Hangup icon**.

![Hangup icon]

How to re-join a Hangout.

Q: What if you decide to leave the hangout briefly, or what if you get kicked out of the hangout due to a connectivity issue? How do you get back in?

A: Just click on the **Join meeting** link on your calendar, or the meeting link in the invitation.

Hangouts apps menu

![Hangouts apps menu]

The 2 fundamental apps that are integrated into Google Hangouts when you are using Chrome are

- **Chat**, which opens a chat window on the right side of the Hangout window. Everyone in the video call can use it. (Tablet and cell phone users, and non-Gmail account users will NOT be able to see or participate in the chat.)

- **Screenshare**, which lets you display open applications on your computer in place of the normal camera (and mute camera) view of your presence in the Hangout. For example, you can show other people Word documents, PDFs, spreadsheets, PPTs, web pages, your desktop, pictures, etc.. (Screenshare and Chat are not integrated into the tablet and smartphone apps for Google Hangouts.)
2018 note: Hangouts Meet

In January, Google released Hangouts Meet for G Suite organizations (i.e., maryland.gov, ccplonline.org, pgcmls.info, prattlibrary.org). In Hangouts originated by these organizations

- the main menu appears at the bottom of your screen,
- the thumbnails are on the right instead of the bottom,
- the chat window is grouped with the thumbnails and superimposes over the thumbnails, and vice versa, and
- Screenshare is called Present now.
TIPS and BEST PRACTICES FOR MEETING PLANNERS

- **Max number of participants.** Hangouts initiated by a Gmail account can accommodate up to 10 computers. Hangouts initiated by a G Suite account can accommodate up to 25 computers. (MSL, PGCMLS, Charles CPL, EPFL/SLRC are G Suite agencies.)

- **Meeting Room.** When selecting a room for the meeting, ask the host agency about amenities such as projection, speakers, camera and telephone. Get assurance that the room will have sufficient connectivity to support a Google Hangout. (Some agencies have rooms set up for videoconferencing.) If you will be using wi-fi, ask someone at the chosen location to do a practice hangout with you so you can test the wi-fi. As a backup try to have a conference phone, or at least a cell phone available to tie remote participants into your meeting if there are internet problems.

- **Someone to assist.** The person chairing the meeting has better things to do during the meeting than playing Screenshare operator, Chat manager, or tech support technician if a guest has problems. These are good reasons to have a colleague, who can connect to the Hangout using their own computer, assist you in the room where people are attending the meeting in person.
  - Be sure secondary and tertiary computers in the room are on mic mute.

- **Screenshare.** If you use Screenshare to display agendas, reports, charts, etc., consider using a second computer to display these things. That way your face can still be seen onscreen via your primary computer while you are sharing files on the second. This implies you need to have a second Gmail address, or ask someone to assist by sharing the material from the second computer on your behalf.

- **Comfort Zone.** Meeting planners should not approach Hangouts as technology for which they will delegate responsibility.
  - Meeting planners need to know how to operate their equipment, how to invite people using Calendar, and how to join and participate in a Hangout before you start holding meetings via Hangout, just in case the person you were hoping would assist cannot attend.

TIPS and BEST PRACTICES FOR MEETING ATTENDEES

- **Comfort Zone.** Know how to operate your equipment. Learn how to join, and participate, in a Hangout before you start attending meetings via Hangout.

- **Connectivity.** Make sure the room where you will be working has a high speed connection.

THE KEY TO HANGOUTS SUCCESS: PRACTICE

*Everybody* should **PRACTICE** using Hangouts with a colleague until they are comfortable before scheduling or attending meetings via Hangout.