

What is Doodle and how does it work: an introduction

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What is Doodle?

Doodle is an online scheduling tool that can be used quickly and easily to find a date and time to meet with multiple people. First you suggest dates and times for your event participants to choose from, then Doodle creates a polling calendar that can be sent to participants for feedback. As each participant selects the dates and times from the polling calendar that he or she is free, Doodle aggregates the responses and tells you which option works best for everyone.

Getting everyone on the same page is hard enough with just five other coworkers, let alone fifty new volunteers you may have never met. Doodle can be a valuable tool for coordinating a large event like volunteer training as well as a small event like a monthly meeting with the board.

Doodle in Action

Part of Doodle's appeal is that it's so easy to use. The site walks you through the four steps of creating a polling calendar:

1. Schedule an Event
2. Propose Times
3. Choose Settings
4. Invite Participants

Each step of the way there are options to make the whole process easier for you and the people you're trying to meet with.

1. Schedule an Event

The first step in scheduling an event with Doodle is to fill out a simple form with the title, location, and description of the event. This information will be visible on the poll, letting participants know exactly what the event is. On this page you will also enter your name as administrator and your e-mail address so that you can receive the link to view, update, or edit the poll.

Notable Features:

- **Easy Directions:** The location automatically links to Google Maps, making getting directions a breeze.
- **Your Own Doodle Account:** Although you are free to use the site without creating an account, signing in makes checking up on your scheduling polls a lot easier (especially if you have several out at a time).

2. Propose Times

The next screen asks you to choose days and times that you are considering for the event.

Days

Click on the dates you would like to choose.

[Calendar view](#) | [Free text](#)

SEPTEMBER 2012						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Selected dates:

- Monday, September 10, 2012
- Wednesday, September 12, 2012
- Friday, September 14, 2012
- Monday, September 17, 2012
- Wednesday, September 19, 2012
- Friday, September 21, 2012
- Monday, September 24, 2012
- Wednesday, September 26, 2012
- Friday, September 28, 2012

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Notable Features:

- **Time-Zone Support:** If you're scheduling an online event, such as a Twitter chat or a video conference, you can enable time-zone support to keep participants across the country or across the world on the same page.

3. Choose Settings

In this third step, Doodle offers some options so that you can modify the basic poll to suit your specific needs. These customizable settings allow you to tailor your Doodle scheduling poll to each event. Among other things, you can use these different settings to transform your scheduling poll into a registration sheet, or to offer extra options to your event participants such as greater privacy.

Notable Features:

- **Yes-No-Ifneedbe Poll:** In a basic poll, the people you invite can only respond “Yes” or “No.” This option adds a third possible response, “If need be,” to give you more detailed information on participants’ availability and flexibility.
- **Hidden Poll:** Perhaps you are looking to schedule times to meet with donors. This option allows you to keep each donor’s schedule and availability confidential from the other donors.
- **Limit Number of Participants per Option:** For example, setting the group limit to ten people per time slot would be handy if you are looking to conduct feedback meetings with past volunteers. Once a timeslot has ten names, it will stop being shown as an option.
- **Participant Can Only Choose One Option:** This option coupled with limiting the number of participants per option turns the poll into a registration sheet, allowing each participant to sign up for a timeslot on a first-come-first-served basis.

4. Invite Participants

The final step is to send out the invitations. Doodle has three methods of delivering your poll to participants: email, Facebook, and Twitter.

For smaller or internal meetings, email is the way to go. But if you are putting together a larger event, like a cookout to thank your volunteers, then a social media platform might be a better choice. By posting the Doodle poll link on Facebook or Twitter, you can simultaneously advertise your event and find a good day for it.

Notable Features:

- **Import Contacts:** Link your Doodle account to your email account to easily import the email addresses of the participants you’re interested in inviting.

The Poll

For the people you have invited, the finished basic poll will look something like this:

SEPTEMBER 2012					
Mon 10			Wed 12		
	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	1:00 PM	9:00 AM	11:00 AM
3 participants					
Volunteer1		✓	✓		✓
Volunteer2	✓		✓	✓	
Volunteer3			✓		
Your name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	1	3	1	1

The people that you invite will enter their name or an ID number in the field that says “Your name” and check the boxes in the time slots when they are free. In the image above, the best time to meet would clearly be Monday at 1:00pm.

Notable Features:

- **Load Your Calendar:** If you do open a Doodle account, you can sync your Google, Outlook, or iCal calendar to Doodle. This lets you avoid switching between calendars, making it easier to respond quickly to scheduling requests.
- **Comments:** There is even a comment section at the bottom of the poll where participants can note dates that they would prefer over others or ask questions about the event.
- **Different Viewing Options:** The image shown above is the table view, which allows your participants to see which dates and times are popular. There’s also an option to look at the schedule on a calendar view, shown below. The calendar view is helpful if you have loaded your own calendar to Doodle for comparison.

The screenshot shows the Google Calendar interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Table view' and 'Calendar view'. The main calendar view displays the month of September 2012. The days of the week are listed at the top: Sun 9, Mon 10, Tue 11, Wed 12, Thu 13, Fri 14, Sat 15. The time slots are listed on the left: 8:00 AM, 9:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 1:00 PM, 2:00 PM, 3:00 PM. Volunteer training sessions are scheduled as follows:

- Monday, September 10th: 9:00 AM Volunteer Training (green), 11:00 AM Volunteer Training (blue), 1:00 PM Volunteer Training (blue).
- Tuesday, September 11th: Patriot Day (grey), 9:00 AM Volunteer Training (red), 1:00 PM Volunteer Training (blue).
- Wednesday, September 12th: 9:00 AM Volunteer Training (red), 1:00 PM Volunteer Training (blue).
- Thursday, September 13th: 9:00 AM Volunteer Training (red), 1:00 PM Volunteer Training (blue).
- Friday, September 14th: 11:00 AM Volunteer Training (blue), 1:00 PM Volunteer Training (blue).

A pop-up window is displayed over the 11:00 AM session on Monday, September 10th. The window title is 'Volunteer Training Session 1'. It contains the text '9/10/12 11:00 AM' and two buttons: 'Yes' and 'No'.

On the left sidebar, there is a 'Proposed dates:' section with a list of dates and times, each with a status icon (green checkmark, blue question mark, or red X):

- ☒ 9/10/12 9:00 AM
- ☐ 9/10/12 11:00 AM
- ☐ 9/10/12 1:00 PM
- ☒ 9/12/12 9:00 AM
- ☐ 9/12/12 11:00 AM

Below this is a 'Your calendars:' section with a link to 'Open account'.

This is a guest post by Michelle Lindblom, a former Communications Associate at [Wired Impact](#). Michelle has just finished her B.A. in Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology and English Literature at Washington University in St. Louis and she's looking forward to a career of combining the powers of language with an understanding of the mind. Read the original post on Wired Impact's blog: <http://wiredimpact.com/blog/doodle-easy-online-scheduling/>