

Google[®]•pedia

Third Edition

Michael Miller

The Ultimate Google Resource



Google[®]pedia: The Ultimate Google Resource, Third Edition

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Introduction

I use Google every day. I've been using it every day since it first launched—before it launched, actually, when it still had the word “beta” on its home page. I use Google because it's easy to use, and because it delivers quality results.

I'm not unusual, of course. Google is the most-used search site on the Web, and most people choose it for the same reason I do—ease-of-use and effectiveness. That's not news.

What is news, for a lot of users, anyway, is that Google is more than just simple search. Most users don't know that they can fine-tune their search in a number of interesting ways, or that they can use Google to find pictures and news articles and compact discs, or that they can use the Google search box to perform mathematical calculations and conversions, or that Google can function as a spell checker or dictionary.

It's also news to most users that Google offers a variety of products and services that have little or nothing to do with web search. Google runs the largest blogging community on the Web, hosts a must-see video-sharing community, distributes a top-notch picture-editing program, and provides free web-based email services. You might not get all this from looking at Google's attractively austere search page, but it's there, nonetheless.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- What's in This Book
- Who Can Use This Book
- How to Use This Book
- There's More Online...
- Get Ready to Google!

All these “hidden” features are what makes Google so interesting, at least to me, and are why I wrote this book. I wanted to show other users all the cool and useful stuff I’ve discovered in the Google family of sites, and to share some of the tips and tricks I’ve developed over the years for getting the most out of Google’s various products and services.

That’s what *Googlepedia* is—a guide to everything that Google has to offer. It’s not just web search (although I cover that, in much depth); *Googlepedia* also covers Gmail and Google Maps and Picasa and every other application and service that has come out of Google’s headquarters—as well as services that Google acquired along the way, such as Blogger and YouTube. There’s plenty of how-to information, of course, but also a lot of tricks and advice that even the most experienced user will appreciate.

I should note, however, that although I know a lot about what Google does and how it works, I’m not a Google insider. I don’t work for Google, and had no official contact with Google while writing this book. That means I don’t always take the company line; I’ll tell you, as honestly as possible, when Google gets it right, when Google needs improvement, and when Google just plain sucks. (The company isn’t perfect.) I’m not obligated to put on a positive face, which means you’ll get the straight poop, good or bad.

What’s in This Book

Google isn’t just web search; the company offers a lot of different products and services, all of which I discuss somewhere in this book. Because of everything that Google does, this is a long book—46 chapters in all, organized into 10 major sections:

- **Part I: Getting to Know Google** provides an inside look at Google (the company and the technology), and then shows you how to use Google’s various tools to personalize your computing and web browsing experience.
- **Part II: Searching with Google** is all about what Google does best—search for information. You’ll learn the best ways to use Google’s famous web search, as well as when to use Google’s other more-targeted search services.
- **Part III: Communicating with Google** shows you why Google isn’t just about search; we’ll discuss emailing with Gmail, instant messaging with Google Talk, blogging with Blogger, and virtual chatting with Lively.

- **Part IV: Working with Google Applications** presents Google's web-based applications, including Google Docs, Google Spreadsheets, Google Presentations, Google Calendar, and Google Reader.
- **Part V: Viewing Images and Videos** is all about pictures and videos, courtesy of Google Images and the uber-popular YouTube video-sharing site.
- **Part VI: Working with Google Maps** is all about Google Maps, Google Earth, and creating your own Google Maps mashups.
- **Part VII: Using Other Google Services** discusses a wide variety of useful and information-rich services, including Google News, Google Finance, Google Health, Google Checkout, and Google Sites.
- **Part VIII: Using Google on the Go** is all about using Google on your mobile phone—including the Apple iPhone and the upcoming Android Google phone.
- **Part IX: Making Money with Google** shows you how to optimize your website for Google search, advertise your site with Google AdWords, and put advertising on your site with Google AdSense.
- **Part X: Google for Web Developers** discusses Google's tools for developers and businesses, including how to add Google to your website, analyze your site traffic, develop applications with Google's APIs and developer tools, create Google Gadgets, create OpenSocial gadgets, and take your web-based applications offline with Google Gears.

There are also two appendixes that present useful reference information, and a third that covers one of Google's most exciting new applications. Appendix A is the Google Site Directory (a complete listing of URLs for all of Google's websites), while Appendix B lists Google's advanced search operators. Handy references, both of them. And Appendix C covers Chrome, Google's very own web browser, the one that has everyone in the industry talking.

If you're wondering what's new in this third edition, the answer is "a lot." That's because the Googleverse is constantly changing; not a week goes by without some new feature being added or some old function being improved upon. To name just a few examples of new features covered in this edition that weren't around when the last edition was published, one needs to look no further than Google Knol, Google Health, Google Presentations, Google Sky, Google Sites, Google's iPhone applications, the Google phone, Lively, the OpenSocial API, and the Chrome web browser. And that's just the new stuff from Google; I've updated all the coverage in the book to reflect Google's current status quo and beefed up the coverage of Google's developer's tools.

Who Can Use This Book

Googlepedia can be used by any level of user; you don't have to be a search expert or application developer to find something of value within these pages. That said, I think this book has particular appeal to more experienced or interested users, as a lot of advanced features are presented. Still, even if you've never used Google (or Gmail or Google Maps or whatever) before, you'll find a lot of useful information here.

How to Use This Book

I hope that this book is easy enough to read that you don't need instructions. That said, there are a few elements that bear explaining.

First, there are several special elements in this book, presented in what we in the publishing business call "margin notes." There are different types of margin notes for different types of information, as you see here.

In most chapters, you'll also find some personal commentary, presented in the form of a sidebar. These sections are meant to be read separately, as they exist "outside" the main text. And remember—these sidebars are my opinions only, so feel free to agree or disagree as you like.

Obviously, there are lots of web page addresses in the book, like this one: www.google.com. When you see one of these addresses (also known as a URL), you can go to that web page by entering the URL into the address box in your web browser. I've made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the Web addresses presented here, but given the ever-changing nature of the web, don't be surprised if you run across an address or two that's changed. I apologize in advance.

note This is a note that presents information of interest, even if it isn't wholly relevant to the discussion in the main text.

tip This is a tip that might prove to be useful for whatever it is you're in the process of doing.

caution This is a caution that something you might accidentally do might have undesirable results.

The other thing you'll find in various places throughout this book is HTML code. A snippet of code might look like this:

```
<p>
This is a line of text.
</p>

```

When part of the code is italics (such as the *URL* in the previous example), this means that you need to replace the italicized code with your own individual information. In the previous example, you would replace *URL* with the full URL and filename of an image file you want to include in your auction template.

If you're a web page developer, you'll know what to do with this code. If you're not, you might want to skip over those sections. (You don't have to be a developer to use Google, of course.)

There's More Online...

I urge you to move outside the Google universe from time to time and visit my personal website, located at www.molehillgroup.com. Here you'll find more information on this book and other books I've written—including an errata page for this book, in the inevitable event that an error or two creeps into this text. (Hey, nobody's perfect!)

While you're on the Web, check out Googlepedia: The Blog (googlepedia.blogspot.com). This is my own blog devoted to the topic of Google and *Googlepedia*. I post about the latest developments in the Googleverse, as well as updates to this book. Visit it regularly.

And if you have any questions or comments, feel free to email me directly at googlepedia@molehillgroup.com. I can't guarantee that I'll respond to every email, but I will guarantee I'll read them all.

Get Ready to Google!

With all these preliminaries out of the way, it's now time to get started. Although I recommend reading the book in consecutive order, that isn't completely necessary, as each part of Google exists independently of the other parts; just as it's okay to skip around through Google's various products and services, it's also okay to skip around through the various chapters in this book.

So get ready to turn the page and learn more about using the Google family of sites. I know you'll discover features you haven't noticed before, and hopefully become a more effective searcher.

The Google Phone: Understanding Android

In 2007, Apple introduced the iPhone, a revolutionary take on the traditional smartphone. This led to rumors of a “Google phone” to compete with the iPhone, especially in the realm of web-based applications and services.

But Google isn’t a hardware company, as Apple is, and had no interest in manufacturing or selling a phone itself. Google did, however, see tremendous profit potential in the mobile market, but from selling advertising tied to mobile services, not from selling phone hardware. This, then, was to be the “Google phone”—not a mobile phone but rather a mobile platform on which Google could port its many web-based services and break into the mobile advertising market.

This new mobile platform was dubbed *Android*—and is the basis for a new generation of smart web-based phones from a variety of global manufacturers.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- What Is Android?
- Examining the HTC Dream: The First Google Phone
- A Final Word

What Is Android?

Android is not a mobile phone; it's software, not hardware. Specifically, Android is a software platform and operating system for a variety of mobile devices. It was developed jointly by Google and the Open Handset Alliance, a consortium of 34 hardware, software, and telecom companies.

note Learn more about Android, the Android SDK (software development kit), and Android applications at code.google.com/android.

The Android project was unveiled on November 5, 2007, shortly after Apple's release of the first-generation iPhone. Android is based on the Linux operating system; software developers write programs for Android using a Java-like scripting language.

The Android platform supports a wide variety of connectivity technologies, including GSM/EDGE, CDMA, Bluetooth, and WiFi. It supports both text (SMS) and multimedia (MMS) messaging, and includes an open-source web browser. Android also supports a variety of audio/video/photo formats, including JPG, PNG, GIF, MP3, AAC, MPEG-4, and H.264. It can also accommodate touch-screen input, video/still cameras, and GPS technologies.

Examining the HTC Dream: The First Google Phone

Several manufacturers, including Samsung and LG Electronics, are said to be developing phones based on the Android platform, and numerous carriers, including T-Mobile and Sprint, are supporting the platform for their cellular networks. That said, the first Android phone on the market is likely to be the Dream, manufactured by HTC and offered for sale by T-Mobile.

What is the HTC Dream? It's an iPhone-like smartphone, complete with touchscreen input and the capability to run a variety of custom applications. Look for these features on the final shipping unit:

- Large touchscreen with haptic feedback—that is, a tactile response when you touch a control on the screen.
- Slide-out design that reveals a full QWERTY keyboard under the touchscreen.
- Icon-based interface, like the one shown in Figure 37.1.

- Capability to enhance functionality by downloading custom applications.
- Internet connectivity with built-in web browser.
- 3G data network support.
- 3 megapixel digital camera.
- iPhone-like dimensions of 3" wide by 5" long.

**FIGURE 37.1**

A preview of the Android phone home screen.

In other words, the HTC Dream, powered by the Android platform, will be a head-to-head competitor with Apple's iPhone 3G. And you can expect it to come preloaded with a suite of Google's web-based applications, including Gmail, Google Maps, Google Calendar, and Google Docs.

note I'm writing about the Dream in September 2008, and details are predictably scarce. By the time you read this chapter, however, the Dream will be on sale and you'll know exactly what it is and what it does.

COMMENTARY

WHY ANDROID?

Given Google's history of Internet-based services for computer users, why is it diving head-first into the mobile phone market? After all, unlike Apple, Google has no intentions of making money from selling phones or sharing the revenue from cellular phone service.

No, Google isn't interested in hardware or service plans. It's interested, as always, in advertising. And Google believes that the market for mobile phone advertising will be even bigger than the market for Internet advertising in which it currently competes.

Remember, Google gives away its applications, both on the computer and for mobile phones. What it makes money on is selling the advertising that surrounds these applications, whether we're talking ads on search results pages, email messages, maps, or whatever. If Google can serve up the screen, it can serve up an advertisement on that screen.

And we're talking about a lot of mobile phone screens. The global mobile phone market consists of more than 2 billion users, which presents a lot of opportunities to serve up ads on those users' phones. *That* is why Google is aggressively pursuing the Android platform; it wants to ensure an open platform for its mobile apps and services—and its very profitable advertising.

As Google CEO Eric Schmidt said in an interview, "We can make more money on mobile than we do on the desktop, eventually." That's what it's all about.

The Bottom Line

Get this straight: Google isn't selling a "Google phone" to compete with Apple's iPhone. Instead, it's addressing the software/operating system end of things by helping develop the Android platform, all the better to propagate its applications and services to billions of mobile phone users around the globe. Phones based on the Android platform are open to all developers but will be especially Google-friendly; expect to see a variety of Android-powered phones from many major cell phone manufacturers and service providers throughout the coming months and years.

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