

Tracking, Listening & Organizing: Google Alerts & iGoogle

Tracking news about your organization and topics of interest keeps you in-the-know and provides a constant flow of potential new content for your website/blog.

The easiest way to track issues/organizations/people/events is through Google Alerts. Once a week, once a day, or as news happens (depending on your preference), Google will e-mail a list of the latest and most relevant news stories, blog posts and other online content on any topic you choose.

You select the sources: news, web, blogs, videos, groups. Or select "comprehensive" to monitor all sources.

Before you use Google Alerts or other Google products, create a Google account – or login to an existing one. Having an account allows you to manage and track all your Google services.

ACTIVITY: Create a Google alert for your organization or a specific topic

1. Go to <http://www.google.com/alerts>
2. Enter the search terms Google will use; what part of the web you want to search; how often you want to search; and your e-mail address
**Tip: Use quotation marks around exact phrases; visit the Google Alerts help page for more on advanced searches and relevant results*
3. Yes, it's that simple!

ACTIVITY: Set up an iGoogle page for news, personalized features and RSS feeds

iGoogle is your own personalized homepage or "portal" through which you can organize and access information that is most important to you – everything from your local weather to your Netflix queue. It's also an easy way to view selected headlines from favorite blogs and news sources and track your social media applications, including Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, etc.

1. Go to <http://www.google.com/> and login or create a Google account.
2. Once you are signed in, click on the iGoogle link in the upper right corner.
3. Once you land on the "Welcome to iGoogle" page, select "some of our most popular content." Go ahead and choose what interests you and click "Save."

4. Now you have a functioning iGoogle page. You can choose the order, arrangement and design of your content, and you can add and subtract content at will. Here are some tips:

- **To move stuff around**, "drag and drop" the title bars for each item.
- **To delete content**, click the "x" in the title bar of a particular item.
- **To add pre-set content**, click "Add Stuff" link in the upper right of the content area; narrow your selection by category (left column) or browse through gadgets.
- **To change the colors and graphics**, click "Select Theme" in the upper right of the content area.
- **To manage your content on different pages**, use the pull-down menu next to Home (left column) and select "Add a Tab." Name it whatever you like. It's helpful (but not essential) to open the right tab before you add the gadgets or feeds you want to appear on that page. But you can always drag content to any tab.
- **To add RSS feeds**, select "Add stuff" and then click "Add feed or gadget" in the lower left corner. Enter the RSS feed of the site you want to track. The headlines will appear as the first item in the upper left corner of the content page. You can move them to wherever you like.
- **To add personalized Google Alerts**, use the RSS feed associated you're your search*, or select "Add Stuff." In the search for gadgets field, type "google news customized" (no quotes needed). Once it appears, select "add it now." Return to your iGoogle page and enter the topic or name you want to track. Repeat until all your alerts are visible.

*If you have a Google account, go to "Manage Alerts." Here you can change the alert distribution method from email to RSS feed, and then add the feed to your iGoogle page. It's fine to set up the same alert twice and track it with both RSS and email.