

## **Planning the Task with Google Apps**

Imagine a classroom getting ready to start working on a project. The teacher has just assigned the driving question--a question designed to look into the heart of a discipline and serve the purpose of organizing and driving activities in the project. Getting ready to plan activities for this project turns out to be a challenging task for the students. The teacher, who anticipates the difficulty, decides to break the task into more manageable sub-goals and provides them with a project template designed to systematically guide them through the core components of a project: defining the task, documenting information sources, recording observations, inferences and questions. Using this template helps students become task driven, thoughtful planners, focus on one small thing at a time and pay attention to details. As a result, students end-up gathering a meaningfully organized body of information they can rely on to answer the driving question and write their project conclusions.

A typical project in a planned project-based environment may begin in different ways. How to begin depends on students' grade level, their experience with project-based learning, and to what extent the teacher is ready to delegate responsibility to the student. Task assignments may be the first thing students decide on or it may come after the driving question, if students are the ones developing it. The decision to engage elementary students in project-based learning and train them to take charge of the process is quite demanding and most teachers don't have the necessary time to make it happen. Therefore, teachers in my school prefer to assign the driving question, provide clear project specifications and assign specific roles to each team member in the group. This does not warrant that task assignments are predetermined by the teacher. Each member's task is wide enough to break it down to clear steps and deadlines. Students engage in task assignments after they understand the assignment well enough and have a chance to generally overview the subject.

The process of task assignments follows the students' analysis of the role they assume. Based on their understanding of the role, they devise a set of steps and deadlines to perform it. Team work facilitates peer review, helping each member refine their task assignments. They also need to learn to synchronize their tasks, if task precedence is important for project completion. The tool that enables all this consists of a 'Task Assignment Sheet' and an 'Assignment List,' both part of a Google Site Projects Template created by me. The following section describes how to create a 'Task Assignment Sheet' by breaking the task into the necessary steps and components that are needed for students to be able to use it and collaborate. It is very important that you perform these steps in the order they are listed. Otherwise, you may have problems with sharing the information correctly with all team members.

### **How to Create a Task Assignment Sheet:**

#### **Creating The Form with Google Docs:**

1. Go to **Google Docs** (Part of your Gmail account or part of Google Apps, if your school is using it).
2. Go to '**Create New**' and select '**Form**.'
3. Give a name to your form by typing it in the '**Untitled Form**' text area.
4. Underneath the name, you may include a short description of your form.
5. Create new Questions (fields\*) for your own task sheet form or use mine as follows: Group, Student Name, Project Section, Project Part, What needs to be done, Who needs to do it, How will it be done, When will it be done.

6. Question types in my form (field types\*) are mostly **'Text'** or **'Paragraph Text,'** except for one that is **'Checkboxes.'**
7. Each question (field) has a **'Question Title,' 'Help Text,' 'Question Type'** and a checkbox to **'Make This a Required Question.'** Each question also has three buttons on the left that allow you to **'edit'** the question, **'duplicate'** it, or **'delete'** it altogether.
8. To add a new question (field\*), click on the **'Add Item'** menu on the top and select the type of question you wish to add.
9. When you finished all questions (fields), press **done.**
10. Select a theme for you form by clicking on the **'Theme'** button on the top. It indicates that the default theme is plain. You can change it to any of the selections you are provided.
11. When you are finished with the last finishing touches, press **'Save.'**
12. The form is a template for gathering the information you specified in the questions. The results will be listed in a spreadsheet that can be reviewed by clicking on the **'See Responses'** button and selecting **'Spreadsheet.'**

\* In Google form, information holders are called **'Questions'** because they can serve both for gathering information and for surveys. Using a database terminology, information holders are called **'Fields.'**

### **Creating a Template with Google Sites:**

1. I have created a **'Project Template'** that you are welcome to link to and download (instructions for fetching the template are below in **'How to Use My Project Template'**).
2. You may create your own template by following the instructions on the [Google Sites Help](#) site.

### **Share Your Form with Your Team Members:**

1. Go to Google **Documents** or Google **Docs** (in apps).
2. Select the **'All Items'** category on the left.
3. Find your form's name in the list and click on it to open.
4. The spreadsheet opens.
5. In the top right corner, you will see a **'Share'** button. Click on it.
6. Select **'Invite People.'**
7. In the prompt that opens, type in your team member's e-mail addresses separated by commas, under **'Invite.'**
8. Make sure that **'to edit'** is selected. You may include a subject and a message like in any other e-mail and press **'Send.'**
9. Your document has been shared.

### **How to Use My Project Template:**

1. If you decide to use my **'Project Template,'** you need to fetch it from the Google Sites Gallery.
2. Go to **'Google Sites.'**
3. Click on the **'Create New Site'** button.
4. You get a selection of a **'Blank Template'** or other templates you can use.
5. Click on the **'Browse the Gallery for More'** choice.
6. Select the **'Schools and Education'** category and find **"Project Template"**.
7. or, type into the search field **"Project Template."**
8. You will get several **"Project Template"** templates. Mine starts with the description: **"This is my idea for a project template...."**

9. Click on it. You may preview the template before you select it.
10. After selecting, you need to rename your site to reflect the topic of your project. You may also change the theme to something you like and fill in additional information about the site before you press the '**Create Site**' button.

### **Share your Project Template with Your Team Members:**

1. On the bottom of the '**Project Navigation**' bar you will find the '**Edit Sidebar**' link. Click on it.
2. Select '**Sharing**.'
3. Type the e-mail addresses of your team members into the '**Invite People to Your Site**' field.
4. Make sure that '**as collaborators**' is selected.
5. Click on the '**Invite These People**' button.
6. In the window that shows up, type a message and click on '**Send**.'
7. Your site has been shared with your team members.

### **Embed the Form and the Spreadsheet in Your Project Template:**

1. Go to Google **Documents** or Google **Docs** (in apps).
2. Find the form you designed previously and click on it.
3. The spreadsheet will open.
4. Find the '**Form**' menu on the top and select '**Edit Form**.'
5. On the bottom of the form you should see a message as follows: "**You can view the published form here:..**" and a document url (web address) follows.
6. Copy the url (web address) that starts with: "http://," by selecting the entire address and pressing '**Ctrl + C (Windows)**' or '**Command + C (Mac)**' on the keyboard.
7. Go to your new site (the one you created or used the template for.)
8. Go to the '**Task Assignment**' page by clicking on it in the '**Project Navigation**' area.
9. On the top right corner press the '**Edit Page**' button.
10. Click inside the site's main area (underneath the page name).
11. Go to the '**Insert**' menu on the top and select '**Spreadsheet Form**.'
12. Click inside the field that says: "**Or paste a web address here**."
13. Press '**Ctrl + V (Windows)**' or '**Command + C (Mac)**'. The web address will be pasted.
14. Press '**Select**.'
15. The window that pops up allows you to change the form's name from '**Google Spreadsheet Form**' to a meaningful name that describes its function, such as: 'Task Assignment Sheet.'" It also enables you to define the form's measurements. Adjust it to fit the form.
16. When you are finished, press '**Save**.'
17. Press '**Save**' again on the top right corner to see the embedded form in the page.
18. You may adjust the measurements if not correct by clicking on '**Edit Page**' in the top right corner and clicking once on the form to reveal its menu.
19. Click on '**Properties**' and the window for adjusting the form's measurements will show up.
20. Repeat the steps from before to update the form

### **Embed the Spreadsheet in Your Project Template:**

1. Go back to your newly created site.

2. Go to the '**Assignments List**' page by clicking on it in the '**Project Navigation**' area.
3. On the top right corner press the '**Edit Page**' button.
4. Click inside the site's main area (underneath the page name).
5. Go to the '**Insert**' menu on the top and select '**Spreadsheet.**'
6. A list of spreadsheets will show up from your Google Documents.
7. Click on the name of the Task Assignment Sheet you designed.
8. Press '**Select.**'
9. The window that pops up allows you to change the form's name from the spreadsheet's name to a meaningful name that describes its function, such as: 'Assignments List.'" It also enables you to define its measurements. Adjust it to fit the spreadsheet's width and allow enough space to fill the form with information.
10. When you are finished, press '**Save.**'
11. Press '**Save**' again on the top right corner to see the embedded spreadsheet in the page.
12. You may adjust the measurements if not correct by clicking on '**Edit Page**' in the top right corner and clicking once on the form to reveal its menu.
13. Click on '**Properties**' and the window for adjusting the spreadsheet's measurements will show up.
14. Repeat the steps from before to update the spreadsheet.

#### **Start Using Your Task Assignment Form and Spreadsheet:**

1. Go to your site.
2. Go to the '**Task Assignments**' page.
3. Start typing an assignment into the form.
4. Fill out all required questions (fields).
5. When you are finished typing, press '**Submit.**'
6. Switch to the '**Assignments List**' page using your '**Project Navigation**' area.
7. You should see the assignment you just typed in the '**Assignments List**' spreadsheet.
8. **Enjoy!**