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**What’s better than a conference call…and free?** Google+ Hangouts

Google+ Hangouts allows 10 people to meet “face-to-face” and share documents via the Internet. You can use Google+ Hangout via your computer, iPad, or smartphone if you install the free Google+ app. If you don’t have access to the Internet, you can join a Hangout by phone and listen in on the meeting. These simple step-by-step instructions should help you get set up with Google+ Hangouts for the very first time.

**1. Preparing for a Google+ Hangout**

To join or start a Google+ Hangout, you must have a Google+ account.

**To create a Google+ account**

* Go to <http://plus.google.com>
* If you already have a Google account you use for Gmail, Google Groups, Google Drive or any other Google product, simply sign in.
* If you do NOT have a Google account, click “Create an Account” in the upper right-hand corner to get started.
* Fill out the required profile information.
* Click “Upgrade” to create your Google+ account.

**To complete your Google+ account**

* Add your peers to Circles in Google+
	+ Adding someone to a Circle means that you are interested in reading their content when you log in to Google+. More importantly, it allows you to easily invite them to Google+ Hangouts in the future.
	+ Try to add all of the people you will Hangout with into Circles to make setting up those Hangouts easier.
	+ *Pro tip*: You can create multiple Circles to organize your connections in Google+. Each person can be in more than one Circle. You may want to create a Circle for each group you will Hangout with. For example:
		- Board members
		- Fundraising Committee
		- Camp Staff
	+ *Pro tip*: you can view/edit your Circles and add more people to your Circles later by clicking “Find People” in the left-hand navigation in Google+.
	+ Click “Continue.”
* Add optional information to your profile to make it easier for people to find you.
	+ *Pro tip*: Add a photo so that others will be able to identify you from others on Google+ with the same name.
* Click “Finish.”

*Now you are READY to enjoy a Google+ Hangout.*

**2. How to join a Hangout that I’ve organized for us . . .**

* I will send you an email confirming our meeting date/time of the Hangout.
* At the appointed time, log into Google+ and click on “Events” in the left-hand navigation in Google+ at the time of the Hangout.
* You’ll have to click on “Join,” which will appear at the time of the Hangout.

OR

* If you don’t have Internet access at the time of the Hangout, email me your phone number and we’ll call you to join us by phone.

NOW you’re in. Next, read about navigation inside the Hangout.

**3. What are those controls in my Google+ Hangout?**



* **Invite People**. Click this to add others to your Hangout. (Note: when done adding others, click the “Close” button. Do NOT click the “x” in the upper right corner!
* **Chat**. Allows participants to have real-time online text chat during the Hangout. You can post links to pertinent information; email addresses; or other information you want to share.
* **Screenshare**. Use this feature to show your screen to other participants. You can share anything on your computer: document; spreadsheet; presentation; Internet demo; etc.
* **Capture**. Allows you to take a photo of the Google+ Hangout. It is automatically shared with all participants.
* **Google Effects.** Allows you to add sound effects, hats, and other props to the Hangout.
* **Google Drive.** Allows you to review a document in Google Drive within the Hangout. Note that this is NOT screensharing. Each participant must open the same document from Google Drive and scroll to the same place to view together. Google Drive documents must be shared with everyone for them to have access as well.

**Troubleshooting**

*Your video is not showing in the Hangout*

* Be sure the “Turn camera off” icon is NOT selected in the upper right corner of the Hangout window.
* If you are still experiencing issues with video, click the Settings button in the upper right corner of the Hangout window. In the Settings pop-up (see below), change the camera selected. Select “Save Settings.”
	+ Note: if no camera is listed in the drop-down, you may not have a webcam connected to your computer and will not be able to share your video. However, you will still be able to view everyone else in a Hangout.



*Your audio is not working in the Hangout*

*  Be sure the “Mute microphone” icon is NOT selected in the upper right corner of the Hangout window.
* If you are still experiencing issues with audio, click the Settings button in the upper right corner of the Hangout window. In the Settings pop-up (see above), change the microphone selected. Select “Save Settings.”

*You can’t hear others in the Hangout*

* Verify your computer isn’t muted.
* If you are still experiencing issues with audio, click the Settings button in the upper right corner of the Hangout window. In the Settings pop-up (see above), change the speakers selected.
	+ Click the “Play test sound” link to verify your speakers are working.
	+ If you can’t hear the test sound, change the speaker selected and try again.
	+ Once you hear the test sound, select “Save Settings.”
* If you still can’t hear others in the Hangout, ask them to check if their “Mute microphone” icon is selected.

*The Hangout video or audio is very choppy*

* Close your browser; open your browser again; navigate back to Google+ and rejoin the Hangout.
* Note that video/audio issues may also be due to insufficient bandwidth. For example, if your location has poor internet connectivity or you are using WiFi, you may experience these issues. If you can find a better connection, that may resolve these issues.

**4. Here’s how you initiate a Hangout and invite others. . .**

**Starting a Hangout on the Fly -**

* Click on “Hangouts” in the left-hand navigation in Google+
* Click “Start a Hangout” in the upper right corner of the screen.
	+ *Pro tip*: If your camera is active, you’ll see yourself as you’ll appear to others in the Hangout at the bottom of the screen. If you don’t see video of yourself, see “Troubleshooting” above.
* In the box that reads “+ Add names, circles, or email addresses,” type in individual names and/or Circles of people you want to Hangout with.
	+ *Pro tip*: If you click the “+telephone” link, you will be able to call someone who does not have a Google+ account or is away from their computer. They will be able to participate only in the audio portion of the Hangout. U.S and Canadian numbers are free.
* In the box that reads “Name this hangout,” type in a name to describe the Hangout. Everyone invited to the Hangout will see this name.
* *Pro tip*: If you check the “Enable Hangouts on Air” checkbox, it will make the Hangout publicly available to anyone with a Google+ account. For the vast majority of your Hangouts, you will **NOT** want to check this box. For more information about using Hangouts on Air, please contact Kevin at JCamp 180 (kevin@hgf.org.
* Click “Hangout” to start the Hangout.

**5. How to Schedule a Hangout in Advance**

* Click on “Events” in the left-hand navigation in Google+
* Click “Create Event” in the upper right corner of the screen.
* Click “Event Options” and then select “Advanced.” Be sure “Google+ Hangout” is selected.
	+ The Location field will be auto-filled with “Google+ Hangout – This event will be online.”
* Type in additional details about the event – Title, Date/time, and Details.
* Type in individual names and/or Circles of people you want to Hangout with.
* Click “Invite” to schedule the Hangout.
	+ You will see the Event listed when you click “Events” in the left-hand navigation in Google+.
* *Pro tip*: Many of your participants rarely check their Google+ account. You should also send all participants a standard meeting request with the date/time of the Hangout. Tell them to click on “Events” in the left-hand navigation in Google+ at the time of the Hangout. They’ll have to click on “Join,” which will appear at the time of the Hangout.

***When Should We Use Google Hangouts?***

When in-person meetings aren’t possible, we have a few choices for meeting virtually. The most basic – conference call – is the simplest to set up and is fine for regular check-ins. However, most conference call services require participants to pay long distance charges, which can be high if people outside of the United States are involved. Also, using videoconference or screensharing tools can make virtual meetings more engaging. If you would like to use something other than a traditional conference call, here are our best options.

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|  | **GoToMeeting** | **Google+ Hangouts** |
| Capacity | Up to 25 people can participate. | Up to 10 people can participate. |
| Video capacity | Up to 6 people can share their video | Up to 10 people can share their video |
| Concurrent Hosting | Only one GoToMeeting can be running at a time with our JCamp 180 account | Each of us can run Google+ Hangouts simultaneously. |
| Ease of Joining | Participants must auto-download GoToMeeting to join; it occurs automatically when they join the meeting. A few users have had trouble joining because their company firewall doesn’t allow them to download the program. | All users must create a Google+ account and remember to login to Google+ for each Hangout. Once they have an account, logging in should be no problem. |
| Ease of Hosting | GoToMeeting has more controls and may take some time to learn to manage on your own. | Interface – once you have started the Hangout – is easy to navigate. Only a few Hangouts should be required to master the functionality. |
| Functionality | GoToMeeting is optimized for sharing your screen, especially presentations. Organizers of the meeting can easily take control of the screen or allow others to show their screen. Playing video/audio in GoToMeeting does not always work. | Google+ Hangout is optimized for videoconferencing and chat. Screensharing works okay, but is not as strong as in GoToMeeting. Integration with Google Drive is nice, but not fully functional yet. Playing a video on Hangouts is a breeze. |
| Recording | GoToMeetings can all be recorded. You can decide at the last minute to record. GoToMeeting recordings must be converted to be uploaded to Vimeo to be shared after the meeting. | Only Google+ Hangouts on Air can be recorded. They are publicly viewable and automatically get recorded to a YouTube channel (this connection must be set up before a Hangout on Air can be recorded). |
| Cost | GoToMeeting requires an annual contract. JCamp 180 already pays this annual fee. Other camps can purchase an annual contract inexpensively via TechSoup. | Free to use. |

Still have Questions? Email me, your Camp Mentor, Julia Riseman at Julia@hgf.org or Technology Program Manger Kevin Martone at Kevin@hgf.org.