How to organize your Google Photos collection

Google Photos makes it possible to store a lifetime of memories, often without paying a single dime. But when you have thousands upon thousands of images, actually appreciating all of them isn’t always easy.

Luckily, Photos is filled with tools to help you organize your collection and make it more manageable, and most of them require little to no effort to embrace. Take a mental snapshot of the following possibilities, and get ready to experience your memories in a whole new way.

Assemble albums

The most basic method for organizing Google Photos is the good old-fashioned photo album.

- Select the images and videos you want to include. On the web, hold down Shift and click on each item you want; in the mobile app, hold down your finger on a photo for a moment, and then tap on your additional items.
- Click or tap the plus icon in the upper-right corner of the screen and select “Album.” Then, if prompted, select “New album.” (If you want to share the album, you can select “Shared album” instead. If you’re not sure, don’t worry; any album can be shared later.)
- Give the album a name and click or tap the blue checkmark to save it.



Any albums you create will appear in the “Albums” tab. If you want to add to an existing album, follow the same steps as above, only instead of creating a *new* album in the second step, find and select the album you want from the list.

Shift into autopilot

The problem with albums is that you have to take the time to make them. But if all you need is an album showing off all of your images of specific people or pets (yes, pets), Photos can compile that automatically for you:

- Select the “Albums” tab
- On the website, click the blue “Create” option in the upper-right corner of the screen. In the app, tap the “New album” option underneath the “Albums” header.
- Click or tap the option to automatically add photos of people and pets, then select the faces you’d like to include.
- Click or tap “Confirm”
- Give your album a title, then click or tap the arrow in the corner of the screen to exit.



Photos will fill out the album for you and continue to add in relevant new items as they appear in your collection.

Play favorites

An effective way to keep track of standout photos and videos – for future printing, sharing, or whatever – is to take advantage of Photos' built-in favorites system and mark exceptional items as you see 'em:

- Open any image or video in your collection.

- Tap or click the hollow star icon in the upper-right corner.

All of your favorited items will be grouped together in the “Favorites” section at the top of the “Albums” page.

Search and sort

Whether you realize it or not, Google’s artificial intelligence is constantly organizing your collection by person, location, and a variety of other qualities. To explore some of the more advanced ways the service sorts your stuff for you:

- Go to the “Albums” tab and look at the top row on the screen.
- Select “People” (or “People & Pets”) to view your photos and videos broken down by which faces appear in them.
- Select “Places” to explore your collection based on where the items were captured.
- Select “Things” to browse by theme. Everything from selfies and screenshots to holidays, types of places (such as parks, zoos, and beaches), and types of objects are visible within the images.

If you prefer, you can use the search bar to look for photos matching those terms, or other similar terms you want to find. You can even combine multiple terms together — like “concert 2013,” “wedding flowers,” “Paris museum,” or “blue shirt.”

If only our brains had similar summoning powers.

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