



Gmail Tip #31: Improved and New Contacts Features!

The “Contacts” function has been enhanced to provide some additional functionality, and now adopts the familiar Gmail interface. Read on for the details...

Gmail now displays a “Contacts” link in the left column under the “standard views” (Inbox, Starred, etc.) and just above the Labels. Clicking on the link brings up a nicely formatted display that matches the style of the rest of Gmail. It displays the contact name, email address, Note, and any additional information (see below). At the top are two “tabs” that display “Frequently Mailed” and “All Contacts”. I don’t know what the criteria for “Frequently Mailed” is, but it does contain the most-used contacts.

Here are some new or expanded features:

RECENT CONVERSATIONS

Clicking on a contact displays the contact information as well as “Recent Conversations” associated with that contact. Clicking on one of these entries opens it normally with all options available. Very nice.

ADD MORE CONTACT INFO

Clicking on “Edit” allows you to update the basic contact information (Names, Email Address, Note). But there’s a new link: “Add More Contact Info” which lets you add additional “Sections” of information. For example, by default there are “Personal” and “Work” sections defined. Each section contains a Section Name field, Two user-selectable “fields” and an “Address” block. Each User Field has a drop-down label containing the following selectable labels: Phone, Mobile, FAX, Pager, Email, IM, Company, Title, Other. You can also add additional fields as needed.

SEARCH CONTACTS

Near the top of the Contacts screen is a Search field and a "Search Contacts" button. Entering text into this field and clicking the button returns all contacts that **BEGINS WITH** the text. This is important to know because it will search **ALL** contact fields (even the :extended fields) for words beginning with the entered text. For example, entering "Ste" would return "Stephanie", "Steve", and "Stewart" but entering "phani" would not return "Stephanie". Obviously, it would be nice to have extended search capabilities, but this is an excellent start!

ADD CONTACTS

Clicking on the "Add Contact" link lets you enter the standard "Basic" information, and clicking the "Add More Contact Info" link opens the extended information screen as described above.

IMPORT CONTACTS

The "Import Contacts" link is still there letting you import contacts from a CSV file. According to the documentation, "other" information gets imported into a Notes field. There is no mention of importing into the new "extended" fields.

BETTER INTERFACE

What really makes this shine is the fact that it now uses the same interface as the rest of Gmail giving it some better consistency. That has always been one of Gmail's strengths: a slick, clean, non-cluttered, fast interface. The added Contacts handling keeps with that philosophy.

So there you have it: some improved Contacts functionality!

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1. Gmail Tips

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2. import

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