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# Google Calendar for Santas

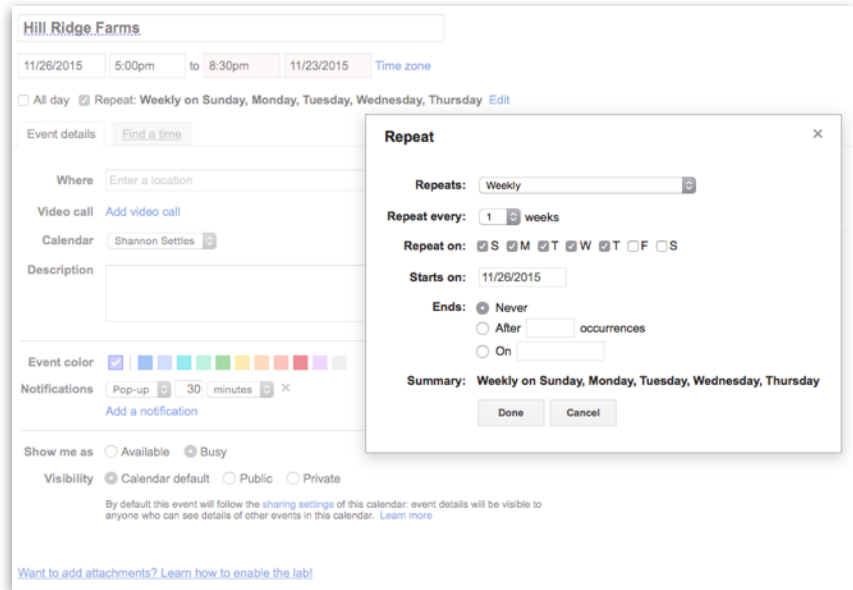
## A brief introduction of capabilities and overview of setup

I use Google Calendar to manage my appointments and to display the ones I want shown to the public. One of the great advantages of Google Calendar is that it is available not only from my home computer but also using my iPhone and iPad (and most other smartphones and tablets) and even from pretty much any web browser (like a library computer). On my iPhone the built-in calendar program syncs up with GC so I don't have to use some specialty calendar (although they do have a great app for Android if you are looking for a new Calendar app). If I run into a client at the grocer and they ask if I have the 16th free I can look it up right then and there, create a new appointment for his desired slot, and within a minute or two that appointment will appear on the calendar on my website without me doing anything. You can just as easily modify and delete appointments and the changes will be applied across all your devices: phone, computer, tablet, and web page, automatically.

There are a lot of moving parts involved in setting up a GC to do the things I've described above so step-by-step instructions for every possible device would be quite an undertaking. I won't attempt it here. But I will sketch out what is needed. First, you will need a Google account. Go to <http://accounts.google.com> and sign up if you don't already have one. When you sign up you will be prompted to create a Gmail account and if you don't already have an e-mail account for your Santa, this is a good time to make one. I have [thatsanta@gmail.com](mailto:thatsanta@gmail.com), for instance. This new e-mail account will be the used by the calendar, so it is necessary to have one. It will then ask you to setup a profile on Google Plus, this is not necessary and you can skip it if you'd rather. The next page should be a welcome screen and you can go straight to your Calendar by clicking the grid in the top right of the window (the Apps button) and choosing Calendar. You will be presented your new, blank Calendar. Creating an event is as simple as finding the date on the calendar and dragging out a box from the start time to the end time and typing in a title. If you hit the Edit

button you will be presented a dialog that will allow you to create anything from a very simple to amazingly complex events. For instance, I have a gig that runs nightly from Thanksgiving to 12/23, and on Su-Th it's 5-8:30 and Fr-Sa its 5-9. I can cover all of that with two events making heavy use of the Repeat options; one for 5-8:30 that repeats weekly on S, M, T, W and T, and another for 5-9 that repeats weekly on F & S (see inset).

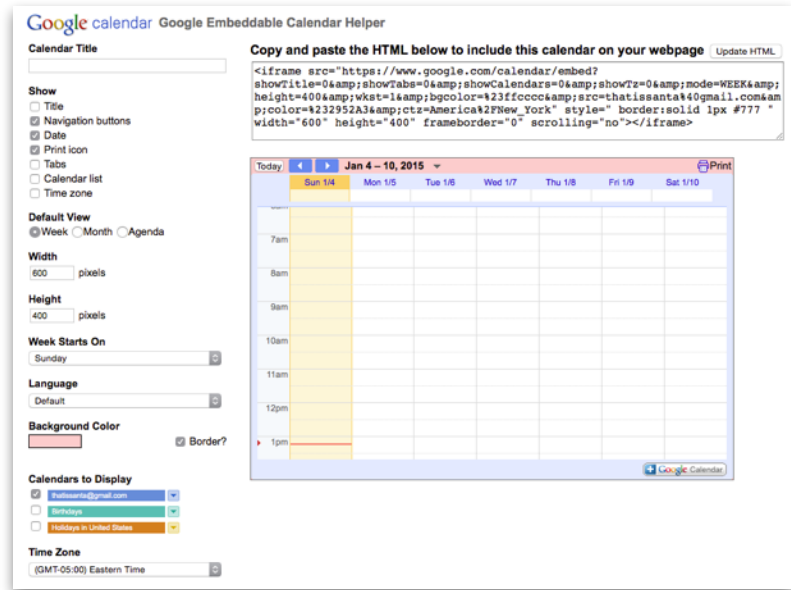
Also in the Repeat dialog you specify the start and end dates, in my case 11/26 and 12/23. Once you exit the Repeat options you will have options for filling in the location of the event (which can be used for GPS navigation later) and to setup notifications to remind you of upcoming events. Be



careful about what info you put into the event, though. If you are making these events to be seen on your website you will need to mark them Public, so you may not want to put the address of a home visit, or the client's name for a private party, and certainly not make notes about balances due! This is one of the greatest limitations of GC, not being able to hide certain fields when publishing the calendar. I have requested this feature, by the way. Once you have filled in the fields you need hit save and, by creating just these two events, the calendar will be filled with twenty-something events.

Once you have entered a few events you might want to try adding the Calendar to your website. On the left of the screen you will see "My Calendars" and below it the name of the account for your calendar. Hover over the name and a dropdown control will appear, click it and choose Calendar settings. Halfway down the new page will be a section called "Embed this Calendar" and on that line will be a box of HTML code that you can copy and paste into your webpage. And that is about all I can tell you about embedding HTML on your page since the specifics will have a lot to do with who hosts your webpage, what authoring tools you use to

modify your page. You'll have to figure this part out on your own, search your host's help for "embed HTML". Also on this line you will see an option to "Customize the color, size, and other options" and I highly recommend you do. For mine I change the colors to match my site better, turn off extraneous controls, set the default view to



“Week”, and customize the size to fit in my webpage’s frames. Just play around with it until you like what you see. Another frustrating limitation: you cannot set the date that the calendar initially shows. I’d sure like it to open up to the date of my next booking, but that feature is not offered (again, I have submitted this request).

The final bit I want to mention in this introduction is how to get your calendar to play nicely with your devices. In the top right of your main Calendar window is a gear icon “Settings”, click that and choose “Sync with Mobile Device”. The window that comes up is the gateway to all the help you should need to get syncing to work with phones, tablets and even computers (no, I don’t know why the menu said “Mobile Device”!).

And that is about as far as I can go, the rest is up to you. In closing, I’d like to say that GC is an enormously useful and easy to use tool which I employ not only for my Santa business, but also for tracking my private appointments, and even use to lay out and share travel itineraries with my family. You can share calendars with others, and can enable others to even modify your events; for instance my wife can edit my doctor’s appointment if they call and tell her I’m going to get bumped back 30 minutes.

