



# Tip of the Month May 2016

## Using Google Voice to Connect and Communicate with Clients

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### What is Google Voice?

Google Voice is a free “Voice over Internet Protocol” (VoIP) call management system. You can create a unique Google Voice phone number, which works through your existing device and functions similarly to a normal cell phone line, to share with clients. Clients can call or text messages to your cell phone using your Google Voice number, while your personal cell phone number remains private. It can be a great tool for attorneys who want to call or text message clients on the go without giving out a personal cell phone number. This service can be particularly useful for solo practitioners, attorneys who travel frequently or work from varying locations, and attorneys who do not use an office phone or who simply need to connect with clients outside the office.

### What features does this tool offer?

- **Voice calling:** You can give clients your Google Voice number so they can call your cell phone. This can be very useful when you are meeting a client in an unfamiliar location, such as a courthouse, and your client may need to call you for directions. Your clients will see only your Google Voice number when you call them through Google Voice, which protects your privacy.
  - **Calls can ring to all of your devices:** You can set up your Google Voice account so that incoming calls simultaneously ring to your office phone, mobile phone, and other devices.
  - **Limit incoming calls to specific hours or activate Do Not Disturb:** To disconnect from work in the evenings or on days off, you can set specific hours for Google Voice to route calls straight to voicemail. Activating Do Not Disturb mode sends all incoming calls to voicemail until you turn the feature off.
  - **Conference calling and voicemail forwarding:** You can use the conference call feature to add co-counsel or another party to your calls.
  - **A note - calls can use your cell phone minutes:** For those with unlimited talk plans, this will not affect you. However, if you have a plan with a limited number of minutes, Google Voice does use those minutes when you make calls. If you make calls through your computer, your cell phone plan will be unaffected.

- **Free text messaging:** You and your client can text message back and forth for free. Your clients will see only your Google Voice number, which protects your privacy. You can receive and respond to text messages from either your cell phone or computer. Many VLN clients regularly use text messaging, and the free messaging feature through Google Voice can allow you to check in with clients even if they are unable to take a phone call. Some clients may prefer a text message to receiving a voicemail, especially when confirming meeting times or locations.
- **Free voicemail transcription:** This is especially useful if you are in a meeting or in court and you receive a call from a client. Google Voice can transcribe the voicemail message so that you can read it silently without stepping out to take the call or listen to the voicemail. Of course, there may be errors in the transcription so it is best practice to also listen to the voicemail when you are free to do so.
- **Personalized voicemail greeting:** You can set up a specific voicemail greeting for your Google Voice number. This allows you to keep your existing voicemail greeting for friends and family on your cell phone while offering clients the information they need through your Google voicemail.
- **Screen or block unwanted callers.**
- **Deactivate and reactivate on demand:** You can deactivate your Google Voice account at any time and reactivate as needed.
- **Pick your area code:** You can choose an area code from a location where you concentrate your practice.

### How do I get a Google Voice number?

If you already have a Google account, you can sign up for a Google Voice number at <https://www.google.com/voice>.

If you do not have a Google account, you can create one for free at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) before activating the Google Voice Service at <https://www.google.com/voice>.

For more information and tutorial videos on various Google Voice features, visit <https://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html>