

A LITTLE HEAD START

Keep the fun. Lose the rework.

A practical guide for your next website, plus a photo-collection workflow you can set up and understand yourself.

START WITH A SMALL, WORKING VERSION

Guests receive a personal email, open your photo page, and follow its upload button. Their files go to your private Drive folder; their answers go to a private response sheet.

What happens	How it happens
Personalized invitation	You preview, test, then click to send an approved batch.
Photo collection + index	Google Forms saves uploaded files to Drive and responses to a linked Sheet.
Shared website gallery	You review permission and publish selected copies. This part is manual in the starter.

Use this guide in order

Pages 2-3: build habits and the photo form.

Pages 4-5: private archive and email setup.

Pages 6-8: test, send, and troubleshoot.

Pages 9-11: publish a gallery, reuse the workflow, and keep the references.

Before you begin: use a desktop browser, a Google account with email sending enabled, and enough Drive storage. Guests need a Google account to upload through this route. Your existing website can simply link to the form.

This is a reusable learning companion. It contains no private client review, guest list, or wedding details. The photo sample is a concept until you connect and test the services.

01 / BUILD HABITS

Make the next site easier to change.

Keep the first version small enough that you can follow the whole journey yourself.

01 Write the job of the page.

Finish: “This page helps [people] do [one thing].” Put that action near the top. For a photo page, use a clear “Share your photos” button.

02 Keep repeated facts in one place.

Use one settings area or content file for dates, contact routes and links. Keep a note of where each fact appears. Leave uncertain details visibly pending.

03 Start with your own rough words.

Keep the specific places, moments and phrases that sound like you. Ask for a light edit. Read it aloud before accepting it.

04 Save, change one thing, check.

Save a restorable version. Make one bounded request. Compare the result on a phone and desktop before publishing.

05 Test the useful details.

Try the main action with keyboard and touch. Check visible focus, labels, empty fields, errors and the success message. Zoom to 200% and check for clipped content.

A BRIEF YOU CAN REUSE

“Build [page] for [audience]. The main action is [task]. Preserve [what matters]. Use only approved facts. Keep public content separate from private records. Show the whole journey, explain where data goes, and give me a short test checklist.”

Check actual text colors: normal text needs 4.5:1 contrast; qualifying large text needs 3:1. A screenshot alone is not a measurement. [W3C contrast guidance](#) · [W3C Easy Checks](#)

02 / PHOTO COLLECTION

Build the upload form.

This first route uses Google Forms, Drive and Sheets. It works alongside your current website without needing access to its code.

01 Create a blank form in your own account.

Open forms.google.com. Use My Drive, not a shared drive. Name it “Share your photos.” Add a short note explaining the Google sign-in requirement and who will see uploads.

Add these four questions

Question	Type + settings
Photos	File upload; Required on; Images only. Start with up to 10 files and 10 MB per file. Change these limits after testing your guests’ likely phone photos.
Your name	Short answer; Required off. Use “How you would like to be credited.”
Caption	Paragraph; Required off. Explain that one caption applies to this upload batch.
Gallery permission	Multiple choice; Required on. Offer “Keep these private with the hosts” and “You may show these photos, my name and caption in the website gallery.” Do not preselect permission.

02 Explain the gallery audience honestly.

If your gallery is public, say so in the permission question. If it is restricted, describe who has access. An unlisted URL can still be forwarded. Ask guests to upload photos they have permission to share.

03 Set the confirmation message.

Use: “Thank you. Your photos have been received. Only photos you allow us to share will be considered for the gallery.” Do not promise that they appear instantly.

A file-upload question requires Google sign-in and stores uploads in the owner’s Drive. Shared-drive forms and some managed accounts cannot use it. [Google: file-upload questions](#)

03 / PRIVATE STORAGE

Connect the archive. Test it as a guest.

The upload folder stores the files. The linked response sheet keeps the timestamp, photo links, optional name, caption and permission together.

01 Choose the response destination.

In the form, open Responses, then the menu for “Select destination for responses.” Create a new spreadsheet called “Photo responses.” Keep it separate from the email guest list.

02 Check access on each item.

Keep the form’s editor access, response sheet and upload folder limited to the people managing the photos. Check each separately. In Settings > Presentation, leave “View results summary” off.

03 Publish the responder version.

Use Publish and its responder-access settings. Allow your intended guests, including people outside your organization if needed. Copy the responder link, not the editor link. Add it to your website’s upload button.

04 Do one complete test.

Use a second Google account on a phone. Upload a harmless JPG, then a normal phone photo. Leave the name blank. Choose private sharing. Confirm the success screen, response row and original file. Repeat with gallery permission allowed.

05 Check space and retrieval.

Open the stored file and download it. Test a file near your limit. Check both the form’s total upload cap and available Drive space. Example: 100 guests × 20 photos × 5 MB is about 10 GB, before your existing files.

DONE WHEN

A guest can upload; you can find the original and its matching permission; another guest cannot browse your private folder or responses. This setup groups files by the form, not into individual guest folders.

[Response destination](#) · [Publishing and response visibility](#)

04 / EMAIL AUTOMATION

Install your small mail-merge helper.

The supplied script sends separate plain-text emails from your Google account. It does not read your inbox, upload photos, publish a gallery, or schedule a future send.

01 Download and read the script.

Open [photo-invitations.gs](#). If it downloads, open it in a plain-text editor. You will paste its contents into your own Apps Script project.

02 Use a new, blank Google Sheet.

Name it “Photo invitations.” Choose Extensions > Apps Script. Replace the initial Code.gs contents with the downloaded code, save, and name the project “Photo invitations.” No web-app deployment is needed.

03 Open the new menu.

Return to the Sheet and reload. Choose Photo invitations > 1. Set up template. Authorize your own project when prompted after reviewing access. It requests this spreadsheet and permission to send email. If a managed account blocks it, ask its administrator.

Fill the Setup tab

Setting	What to enter
Sender name	The names you want guests to see. This changes the display name, not the sending account.
Reply-to	An address you actually monitor.
Photo page URL	Your working HTTPS photo page or published form responder link. The sample preview is not an upload destination.
Email subject	Your preferred short subject, on one line.
Message	Edit the ready-made draft. Keep <code>{{first_name}}</code> , <code>{{photo_url}}</code> and <code>{{sender_name}}</code> exactly as written where needed.

For an unverified-app notice, review your pasted code and Google’s [authorization guidance](#).

05 / PREVIEW, TEST, SEND

Make the button earn your trust.

Complete the first pass with only your own address in Guests. Keep the sheet private and use one row per email address.

Guests column	How to use it
First name / Email	A personal greeting and one valid address. A blank name becomes "Hi there."
Approved	Type YES only for recipients you intend to email. Blank means do not send.
Status / Sent at	Leave blank for a new recipient. The script fills these. Keep them as your send history.

01 Preview without sending.

Choose Photo invitations > 2. Preview approved emails. Read the Preview tab. Check each name, recipient and link. Filtering or hiding a row does not exclude it; the Approved value does.

02 Send yourself the test.

Choose 3. Send a test to me. Enter an address you control. Open the [TEST] email on your phone, follow the link, upload a test photo and check the reply address. This test does not mark any guest as sent.

03 Test the real batch path on yourself.

With only your own row approved, choose 4. Send approved batch and confirm. Your row should become SENT. Run it again: your same row should not be sent twice.

04 Add guests when you are ready.

Add guest rows and set intended rows to YES. Run Preview and check every row before sending. Two or three days after the event is a suggested send window; no timer is installed. Click Send approved batch and confirm when ready.

Each batch: one send confirmation, up to 40 approved unsent rows, within remaining quota. Repeat for more recipients. Photo collection continues automatically through the form.

06 / A VISIBLE BUTTON

Add a button. Keep a useful log.

The menu is enough. If you prefer a visible button, add one on the Guests tab in the desktop version of Google Sheets.

01 Draw the button.

Choose Insert > Drawing. Add a shape labeled “Send approved batch,” then save it into the sheet.

02 Assign the action.

Open the drawing’s menu and choose Assign script. Enter **sendApprovedBatch** with no parentheses. Clicking it uses the same checks and confirmation as the menu. Drawing buttons do not run scripts in the mobile app.

Read the status before trying again

Status	What it means + what to do
Blank	Not recorded as sent. Eligible only when Approved is YES.
SENT	Google accepted the send and the script wrote a timestamp. It is not proof of inbox delivery; check for bounces.
SENDING	The script marked the row before sending. If it remains after a stopped run, check Sent mail before doing anything else.
CHECK SENT	A send or logging error interrupted the row. Check Sent mail and Apps Script Executions. If already sent, mark SENT; if confirmed unsent, clear Status and try again.

Quota: Google currently lists 100 recipients/day for consumer Apps Script accounts and 1,500 for Workspace, with extra limits for some accounts. Tests count. The script checks remaining quota; it does not queue the remainder for tomorrow. Recheck limits before launch.

[Google: drawing buttons](#) · [Google: current quotas](#)

07 / WHEN SOMETHING STALLS

Find the stuck step. Fix that step.

You do not need to rebuild everything because one link, permission or placeholder is wrong.

What you see	First thing to check
No Photo invitations menu	Save the script, return to the Sheet and reload. Confirm it was created through this Sheet's Extensions menu.
Template tabs already exist	Do not run setup again. Use Setup, Guests and Preview. To start a separate project, create a new blank Sheet.
No emails are eligible	Approved must be YES and Status blank. Any nonblank status is skipped. Check quota too.
Duplicate or invalid email	Use one row per address and only one address per cell. Correct the named row, then preview again.
Upload says sign in / denied	Google sign-in is required. Check responder access and any organization restriction. Guests need responder access, never editor access.
Photo is rejected	Check image type, per-file size, total form upload cap and Drive space. Test a normal iPhone photo; HEIC may need a JPG copy for your gallery.
Upload exists; site gallery is empty	Expected in this starter. Forms does not publish to your website. Use the approval and publishing steps on page 9.
Email sent; no delivery confirmed	Check the address, bounces and spam placement. A SENT label is a send record. Do not clear it just because a guest has not replied.

IF GOOGLE SIGN-IN IS A DEALBREAKER

Pause before inviting everyone. [Dropbox file requests](#) allow uploads without a Dropbox account and keep the destination private by default. They are an alternate intake route, not a drop-in replacement for this form's caption and permission fields. Test those differences before switching.

08 / SHARED GALLERY

Publish the photos you mean to share.

The private originals and your shared website gallery have different jobs. Keep the original archive intact; publish a selected set of display copies.

01 **Review permission with the image.**

Use the photo response row to find its files and sharing choice. Keep private submissions out of the gallery. Treat unclear permission as private. Review the actual image too.

02 **Prepare a display copy.**

Make a separate approved-gallery folder. Export selected images in a web-friendly format and reduce their size for the page. Keep the original files. Remove location metadata from display copies when appropriate.

03 **Add the image to your website's own media area.**

Use your builder's upload/media control, then its gallery or carousel component. Add the permitted caption and credit. Give meaningful images useful alt text. Do not paste restricted Drive download links into image fields.

04 **Try the gallery as a visitor.**

Check the image order, portrait crops, loading, captions and previous/next controls on a phone. Prefer manual navigation over autoplay. Keep the upload button easy to find on the same page.

05 **Keep removal straightforward.**

Provide a contact route for a photo-removal request. Remove the display copy and gallery entry promptly when agreed. Keep the archive accessible only to its owners.

THE NEXT AUTOMATION TO LEARN

A future version can publish only records marked both "guest allowed sharing" and "host approved." That requires a connection to your actual website platform and testing its upload, access and deletion behavior. This starter deliberately leaves publishing as a review step.

The exact media and gallery controls depend on your website builder. Use its own help for that part; the rest of this workflow is independent of your hosting platform.

09 / LEARN IT ONCE

Take the pattern to your next build.

The reusable pattern is: one clear action, one place to store information, a visible result, and a way to recover if a step fails.

Part of the script	What you are learning
onOpen	Adds the menu when the spreadsheet opens. It does not send email.
setupPhotoInvitations	Creates the three working tabs once, without replacing existing tabs.
previewPhotoInvitations	Combines your settings with each approved row, without sending.
testPhotoInvitation	Sends one real test to the address you enter. It leaves guest statuses unchanged.
sendApprovedBatch	Checks approval, quota and duplicates; confirms; sends a bounded batch; records results.
Status + document lock	Limits accidental repeated sends. An interrupted send still needs a human check; the log cannot guarantee exactly-once delivery.

For the next event or project

Create a **new** form and a **new** blank invitation Sheet. Install the same script, then change the sender, link, message and audience. Keep the previous project's logs intact. Repeat the self-test with the new destination.

For a different kind of website

Carry forward the page brief, saved versions, shared facts, clear form states and full-journey test. A workshop signup or resource request can use the same thinking, even when the tools change.

Your learning check: explain what starts the workflow, where information goes, who can see it, and how you would stop or retry it.

10 / KEEP THESE HANDY

Your launch check. Your references.

Use the checklist after setup, then keep this page with your project notes.

Before inviting guests

- [] Responder link works for someone outside the owner account.
- [] Phone upload reaches the private folder and response sheet.
- [] Sharing permission is recorded and private choices stay private.
- [] Preview and test email show the right sender, greeting and link.
- [] One-row batch succeeds; running it again does not resend that row.
- [] Storage, upload limits, remaining email quota and reply address are checked.
- [] Guests have a contact route if uploading does not work.

Official references

[Google Forms: question types and upload requirements](#)

[Google Forms: choose a response spreadsheet](#)

[Google Forms: publishing, access and results visibility](#)

[Apps Script: MailApp sending and remaining quota](#)

[Apps Script: menus and clickable drawings](#)

[Apps Script: authorization and account restrictions](#)

[Apps Script: current quotas and execution limits](#)

[W3C: a first accessibility check](#)

[Download the reusable email script](#)

Implementation note: this guide accompanies a starter script. Its control flow was checked locally with simulated Google services; it has not sent mail from your account. Your own test send and form upload are required before using it with guests. No timer, account connection or live gallery is installed by downloading this guide.

Prepared by Katie Roberts · September 2026. Product instructions and limits checked September 16, 2026; recheck the linked documentation before launch.