Introduction to Email

Introduction

Do you ever feel like the only person who doesn't use email? You don't have to feel left out. If you're just getting started, you'll see that with a little bit of practice, email is easy to understand and use.

In this lesson, you will learn **what email is**, how it compares to **traditional mail**, and **how email addresses are written**. We'll also discuss various **types of email providers** and the **features and tools** they include with an email account.

Getting to know email

Email (electronic mail) is a way to **send and receive messages** across the Internet. It's similar to traditional mail, but it also has some key differences. To get a better idea of what email is all about, take a look at the infographic below and consider how you might benefit from its use.

Email advantages

- **Productivity tools**: Email is usually packaged with a calendar, address book, instant messaging, and more for convenience and productivity.
- **Access to web services**: If you want to sign up for an account like Facebook or order products from services like Amazon, you will need an email address so you can be safely identified and contacted.
- **Easy mail management**: Email service providers have tools that allow you to file, label, prioritize, find, group, and filter your emails for easy management. You can even easily control spam, or junk email.
- **Privacy**: Your email is delivered to your own personal and private account with a password required to access and view emails.
- **Communication with multiple people**: You can send an email to multiple people at once, giving you the option to include as few as or as many people as you want in a conversation.
- **Accessible anywhere at any time**: You don't have to be at home to get your mail. You can access it from any computer or mobile device that has an Internet connection.

Understanding email addresses

To receive emails, you will need an **email account** and an **email address**. Also, if you want to send emails to other people, you will need to obtain their email addresses. It's important to learn how to write email addresses correctly because if you do not enter them exactly right, your emails will not be delivered or might be delivered to the wrong person.

Email addresses are always written in a standard format that includes a **user name**, the **@** (at) symbol, and the **email provider's domain**.

The **user name** is the name you choose to identify yourself.

> **Merced Flores** <merced.flores73 @gmail.com>
>
> to me ▼
>
> Hi Julia,
>
> I'm absolutely available as a scientific consultant for y

The **email provider** is the website that hosts your email account.

> **Merced Flores** <merced.flores73@ gmail.com
>
> to me ▼
>
> Hi Julia,
>
> I'm absolutely available as a scientific consultant for y

Some businesses and organizations use email addresses with their own website domain.

> from: **Facebook** <security@ facebookmail.com

About email providers

In the past, people usually received an email account from the same companies that provided their Internet access. For example, if AOL provided your Internet connection, you'd have an AOL email address. While this is still true for some people, today it's increasingly common to use a **free web-based email service**, also known as **webmail**. Anyone can use these services, no matter who provides their Internet access.

Webmail providers

Today, the top three webmail providers are **Yahoo!**, Microsoft's **Outlook.com** (previously Hotmail), and Google's **Gmail**. These providers are popular because they allow you to access your email account from anywhere with an Internet connection. You can also access webmail on your **mobile device**.

Visit the links below to compare the features of the three top webmail providers:

Other email providers

Many people also have an email address **hosted by their company**, **school**, **or organization**. These email addresses are usually for professional purposes. For example, the people who work for this website have email addresses that end with **@gcflearnfree.org**. If you are part of an organization that hosts your email, they'll show you how to access it.

Many hosted web domains end with a suffix other than **.com**. Depending on the organization, your provider's domain might end with a suffix like **.gov** (for government websites), **.edu** (for schools), **.mil** (for military branches), or **.org** (for nonprofit organizations).

Email applications

Many companies and organizations use an email application, like **Microsoft Outlook**, for communicating and managing their email. This software can be used with any email provider but is most commonly used by organizations that host their own email.

Visit our Outlook 2010 tutorial to learn more about using this application.

Email productivity features

In addition to email access, webmail providers offer **various tools and features**. These features are part of a **productivity suite**—a set of applications that help you work, communicate, and stay organized. The tools offered will vary by provider, but all major webmail services offer the following features:

In addition, each provider offers some unique features. For instance, when you sign up for Gmail you gain access to a full range of Google services, including **Google Drive**, **Google Docs**, and more. Outlook, on the other hand, offers connectivity with **OneDrive** and **Microsoft Office Web Apps.** You can visit our tutorials on Google Drive, Google Docs and OneDrive and Office Online to learn more.

Getting started with email

You should now have a good understanding of what email is all about. Over the next few lessons, we will continue to cover essential **email basics**, **etiquette**, and **safety tips**.

Setting up your own email account

If you want to sign up for your **own email account**, we suggest choosing from one of the three major webmail providers.

Practice using an email program

Keep in mind that this tutorial will not show you how to use a specific email account. For that, you will need to visit our Gmail tutorial. It's a useful course for learning the basics, even if you ultimately end up choosing an email provider other than Gmail, such as Yahoo! or Outlook.com. There, you will learn how to:

- Sign up for an email account
- Navigate and get to know the email interface
- Compose, manage, and respond to email
- Set up email on a mobile device

Beyond email: More ways to talk online

Once you've completed the lessons in this topic, you may want to explore other popular ways of communicating and sharing online. Check out our Beyond Email topic to learn more about **online chat**, **text messaging**, **video chat**, **social networking**, and more.

Common Email Features

Introduction

No matter which email service you choose, you'll need to learn how to interact with an **email interface**, including the **inbox**, the **Message pane**, and the **Compose pane**. Depending on the email provider, the interfaces may look and feel different, but they all function in essentially the same way.

In this lesson, we'll talk about using an **email interface** to send and receive messages. We'll also discuss various **terms**, **actions**, and **features** that are commonly used when working with email.

Understanding the email interface

Below are some examples of different **email interfaces** from **Gmail**. Review the images below to become familiar with various email interfaces.

Keep in mind that these examples will only provide a general overview. You can visit our Gmail tutorial to learn how to use an email application in detail.
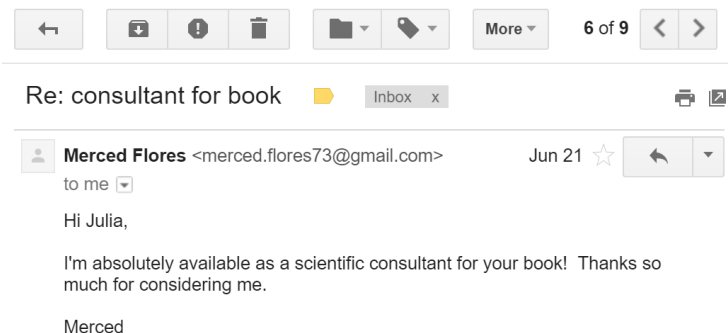
Inbox

The **inbox** is where you'll view and manage **emails** you receive. Emails are listed with the name of the **sender**, the **subject** of the message, and the **date received**.

Message pane

When you select an email in the inbox, it will open in the **Message pane**. From here, you can **read the message** and choose **how to respond** with a variety of commands.

Compose pane

You can click the **Compose** or **New button** from your inbox to open the **Compose pane** to create your own email message. From here, you'll need to enter the **recipient's email address** and a **subject**. You'll also have the option to upload files (photos, documents, etc.) as **attachments** and **add formatting** to the message.

Thank you! Appointment Confirmation   _ ⤢ ✕

Henri Rousseau

Thank you! Appointment Confirmation

Hi Henri,

Thanks again for coming to the grand opening. It was very nice meeting you. I'd like to confirm the appointment you made to come in Saturday at 12:00 for your sibling portrait. I know your parents in Canada are going to love it!

See you Saturday,
Elena

Send   _A_   📎   🔺 $ 📷   🔗   🙂   🗑   ▾
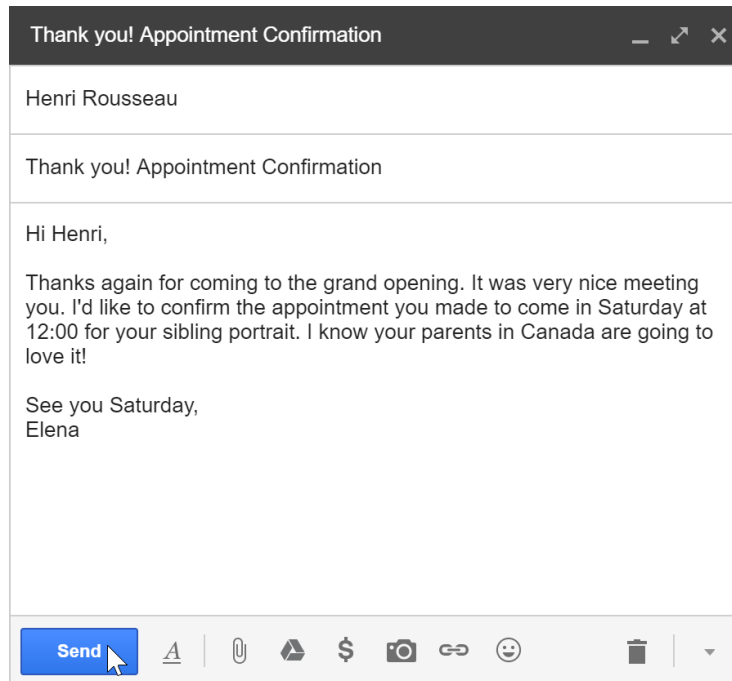
A Compose pane will also appear when you select **Reply** or **Forward**. The text from the original message will be copied into the Compose pane.

Common email terms and actions

All email applications use certain **terms** and commands you will need to understand before using email. The examples below use **Gmail's Compose pane** and **Message pane** to introduce basic email terms, but these will still be applicable for Yahoo! and Outlook.

Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn more about the **Compose pane**.
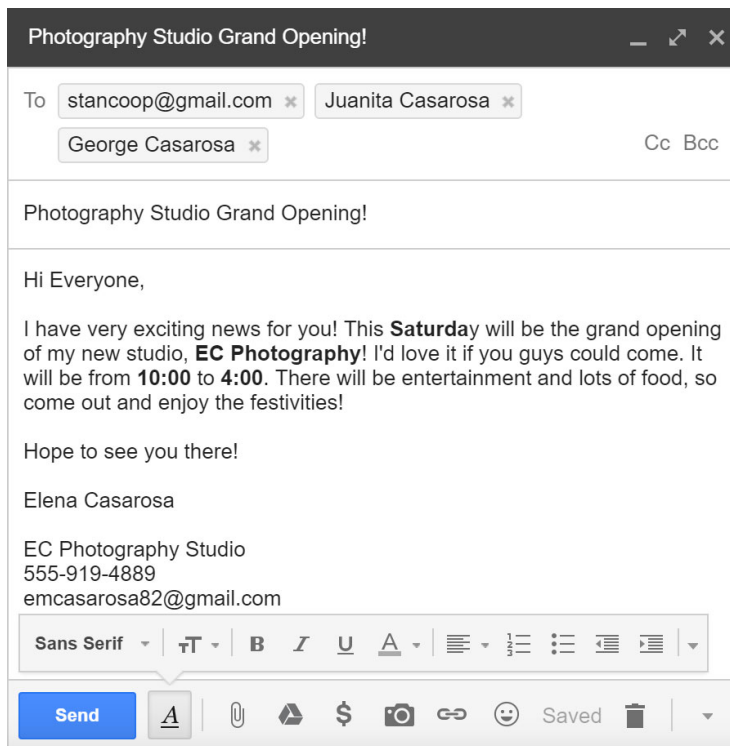
Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn more about the **Message pane**.
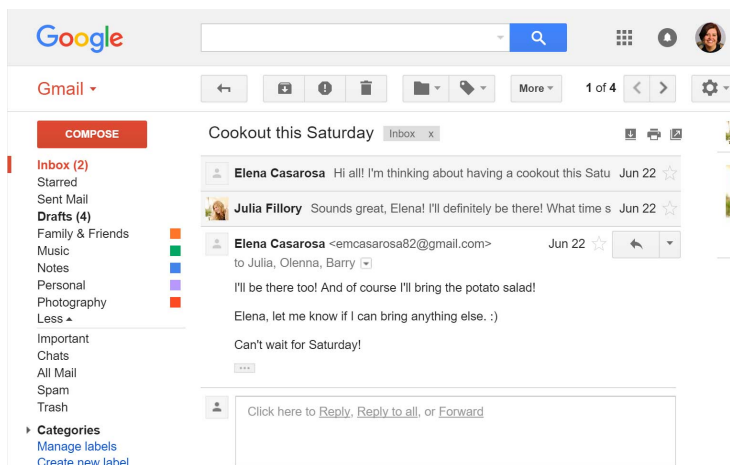
Forward

Whenever you want to **share an email** you've received, you can use the **Forward** command to send the message to another person.

Contacts and Calendars

Introduction

In addition to email services, most webmail providers offer an **online calendar** and **address book**. These features make it easy to **stay organized** and access your **important information** from anywhere.

In this lesson, you'll learn more about the basics of **online calendars** and **contacts lists** using examples from a few common webmail providers, including Yahoo! and Gmail.
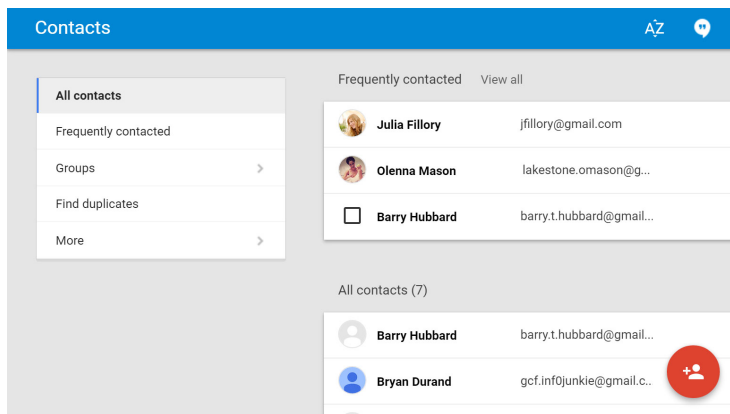
Contacts basics

Online contacts lists help you **organize contact information** for your friends, family, and coworkers, just like an **address book**. Once people are added to your contacts list, it's easy to access their information **anytime and anywhere**.

Review the **examples** below to become familiar with the **basic features** and **advantages** of **online contacts lists**.

Adding contacts

It's easy to **add people** to your contacts list. When you create a new contact, you should (at the very least) enter a **first** and **last name**, as well as an **email address**. However, you can also enter other information, like a **phone number**, **home address**, and more. In most email accounts, the **name and email** of anyone you correspond with will be added to your contacts list **automatically**.

Selecting contacts

Once you've added people to your contacts list, you'll never have to worry about remembering an email address. Whenever you create a new email, you can select the **To** or **Add Recipients** button.

Then **choose recipients** from your **contacts list**. The contacts' email addresses will be added **automatically** to the message. You'll even be able to use the same contact information for other webmail services, like **instant messaging** and **calendar sharing**.
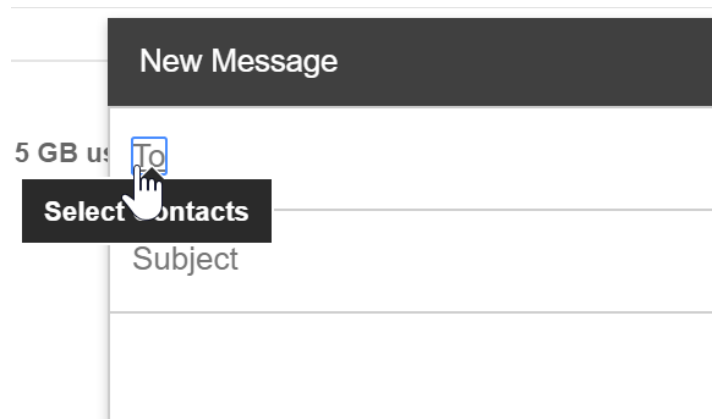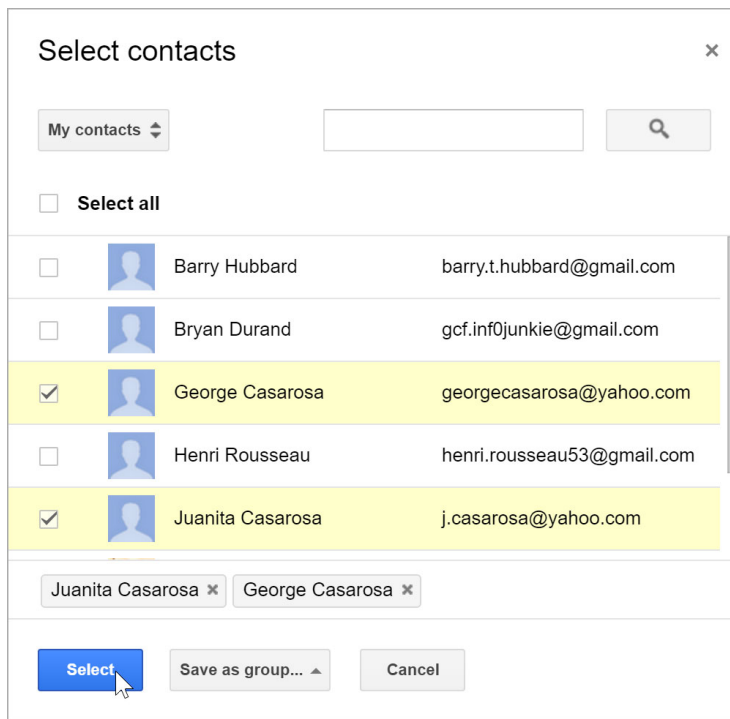
Most email services will also autocomplete or suggest an email address when you start typing, as long as it's an address that's already been saved in your contacts.
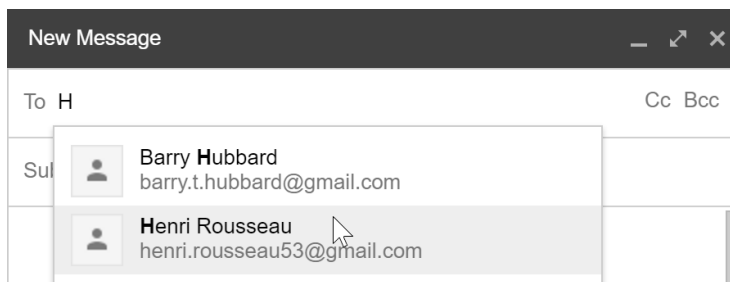
Linking contacts

If you already have a lot of contacts saved in another **web-based service**, such as Facebook or LinkedIn, it's easy to **link them** between accounts, which can save you a lot of time. For example, you could **import** your Facebook contacts to your webmail service or use your existing contacts list to search for friends on Facebook.
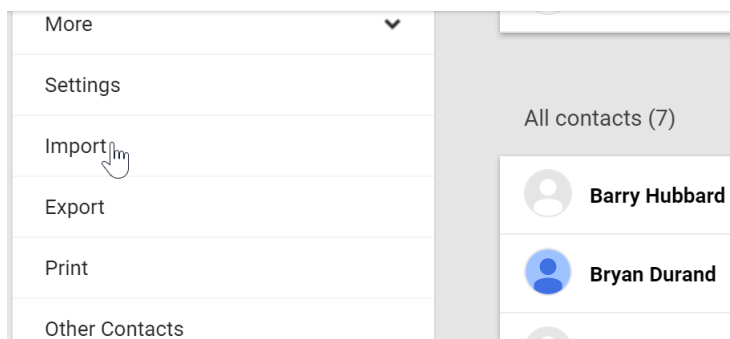
Contact groups

If you frequently connect with the same group of people, you can create **contact groups** for quick access. This

allows you to quickly sort your contacts by type. For example, you might use one group to organize your **personal contacts** and another for **professional contacts**.
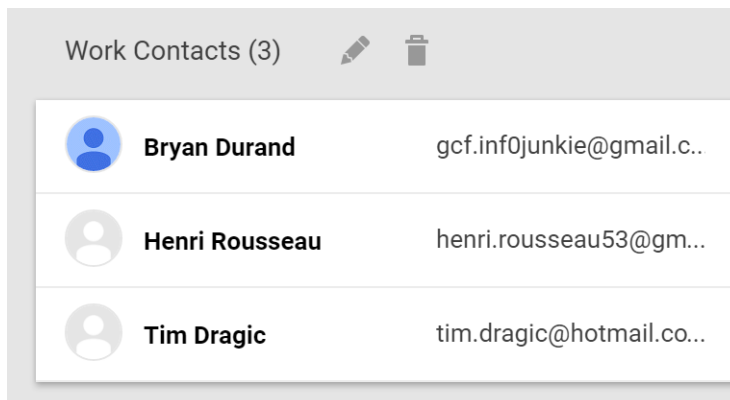
Calendar basics

Online calendars make it easy to **schedule appointments**, **organize tasks**, and **manage your time**, just like a **desk calendar**. But unlike a physical calendar, online calendars give you the freedom to quickly **edit and rearrange** your schedule whenever you want. You'll even be able to access your calendar **on the go** and **sync it across multiple devices**, like your mobile phone and personal computer.
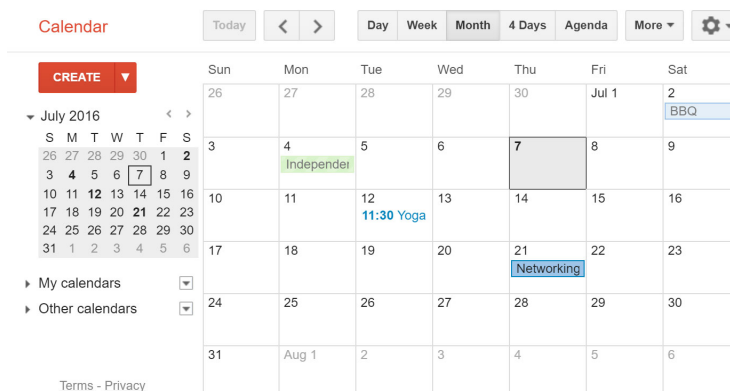
Review the **examples** below to become familiar with the **basic features** and **advantages** of **online calendars**.

Creating appointments

It's easy to **schedule**, **track**, and **edit** upcoming appointments or events. When you create a **new appointment**, you should (at the very least) include a **title**, **start** and **end time**, and **location**, but you can also include other information, such as **reminder preferences**, **detailed notes**, **and more**.

Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn more about scheduling appointments.

Switching views

You can choose a variety of view options for your calendar, including a **daily**, **weekly**, and **monthly summary** of your upcoming appointments.
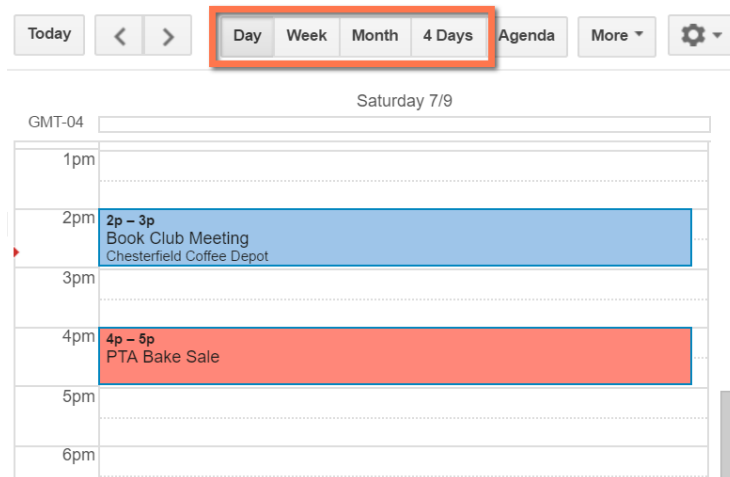
Using multiple calendars

If you keep a lot of **different appointments**, you can create **multiple calendars** to help organize your schedules. For example, you might use one calendar to keep track of your personal tasks and another to manage your family's schedule. Each calendar is assigned its own **color**, so it's easy to organize lots of different appointments. You can even **toggle** calendars **on and off** to easily sort your appointments.
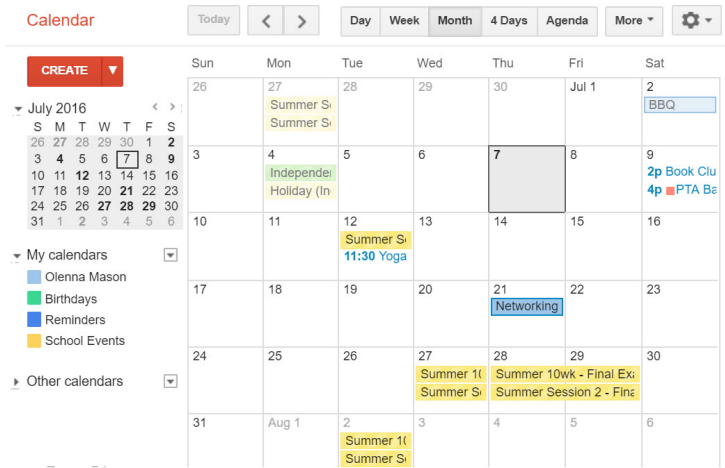
Sharing calendars

You can **share your calendar** with anyone who uses the same webmail provider. Once you've shared a calendar, you'll be able to **view** and even **edit** a friend's calendar, depending on your sharing preferences.
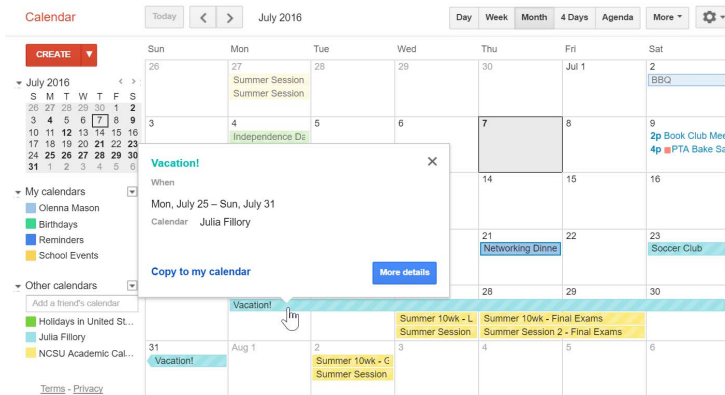
Email Etiquette and Safety

gcflearnfree.org/print/email101/email-etiquette-and-safety

Introduction

Like any form of online communication, it's important to practice good **etiquette** and **safety** when using email. Etiquette is a set of **rules and guidelines** that people use to **communicate more effectively**. You should also know how to protect yourself from certain risks, like **malware** and **phishing**.

In this lesson, we'll discuss writing more effective emails using good **email etiquette**, both for **personal use** and **in the workplace**. We'll also talk about different strategies for using email **safely**.

Tips for email success

Here are some **basic rules** you can follow to write better emails, no matter who you're emailing. In some cases, it's OK to break these rules. Use these rules as a starting point, then tailor each email you send based on the situation.

Click the arrows in the slideshow below to learn more about basic email etiquette.

Email attachment etiquette

Attachments are an easy way to share **files**, **photos**, **and more**, but many people aren't aware of some of the most common **attachment mistakes**. Be sure to follow these basic rules when including attachments in your emails.

Mention included attachments

Never attach a file without **mentioning it** in the body of your email. Something as simple as **I've attached a few photos to this email** will help your recipients **know what to expect**. On the other hand, make sure the attachments you mention **are actually included** with the message—it's easy to focus on your message and forget to include the file itself. We recommend attaching any files **before** you start writing.
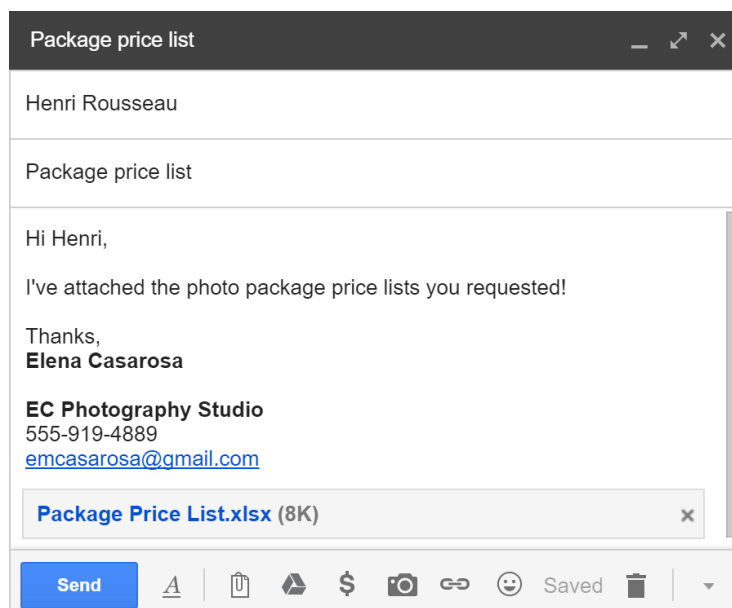
Consider file size and format

Avoid sending excessively **large attachments** or **uncompressed photos**, which can take a long time for your recipients to download. You can always **ZIP** or **compress** files to make them easier to send. Additionally, make sure your attachments don't need to be viewed in a **specific application**—use **universal file types like** .PDF, .RTF, and .JPG.
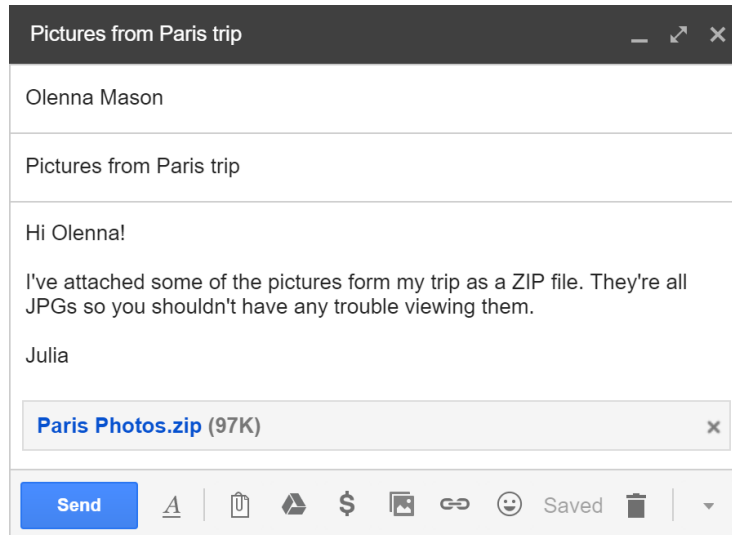
Only include related files

If you need to send a lot of **different files** to the same person, consider sending the attachments through multiple emails. If you include several **unrelated files** in the same email, it can be difficult for your recipients to find the exact file they need.
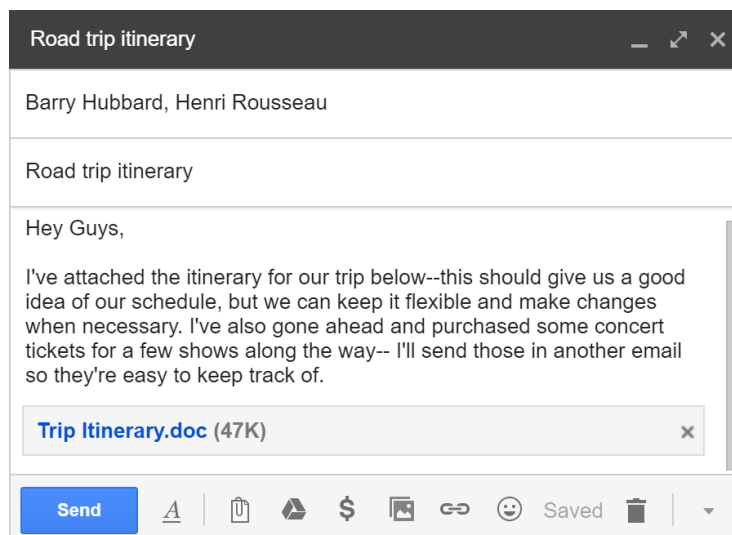
While attachments are still an easy way to share files quickly over email, many people have begun using cloud-based storage services like Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive to **share large files**. Rather than sharing the file itself, you can **share a link**, allowing others to access the file remotely. Check out our lessons on sharing files in Google Drive and sharing files in OneDrive to learn more.

Using email in business

Whether you're using email at work or applying for a job, the normal rules of email etiquette still apply. However, there are a few additional considerations to keep in mind, as **business emails** can affect your **professional reputation**.

Click the arrows in the slideshow below to learn more about using email in the workplace.

Remember, you should never use your work email account for personal communication. It's best to get your own personal account from a webmail service like Gmail, Yahoo!, or Outlook.com. To learn more about using the right tone for work email, check out our How Formal should an Email be? lesson.

Email safety

Email is not totally secure, so you should avoid sending sensitive information like **credit card numbers**, **passwords**, and your **Social Security Number**. In addition, you may receive emails from **scammers** and **cybercriminals**. The first step in dealing with email safety concerns is understanding them so you know what to look for.

☐	☆	▭	**Your Insurance Quote Fin.**	We Have New Rates for Yo
☐	☆	▭	**Cashplay**	You playing in the $150 Nit
☐	☆	▭	**Emergencyemail.ORG Alert**	EmergencyEmail.org Weat
☐	☆	▭	**Upma**	[New Message] You Got a
☐	☆	▭	**Christmas Tree Shops**	Relax!...Summer Patio Ess
☐	☆	▭	**Alice Scott**	iPhone 6S could be availab
☐	☆	▭	**Jay Jays**	Friday treat time, 🎁 🍰 🍭 (
☐	☆	▭	**(unknown sender)**	Unpaid Beneficiary!!!!!! - F

Spam

Spam is another term for **junk email** or **unwanted email advertisements**. It's best to **ignore** or **delete** these messages. Luckily, most email services offer some protection, including **spam filtering**.

Phishing

Certain emails pretend to be from a **bank** or **trusted source** in order to steal your personal information. It's easy for someone to create an email that looks like it's from a specific business. Be **especially cautious** of any emails requesting an urgent response.

Attachments

Some email attachments can contain **viruses** and other **malware**. It's generally safest not to open any attachment you weren't expecting. If a friend sends you an attachment, you may want to ask if he or she meant to send it before downloading.

Learn more about important online safety issues in our Internet Safety tutorial.

Setting up your own email account

Now that you've finished exploring Email Basics, you may feel ready to set up your own email account. You can get a free email account from any major webmail provider, including Yahoo!, Outlook.com, and Gmail.

Our Gmail tutorial will provide step-by-step instructions for **sending**, **receiving**, and **managing** your email.

Avoiding Spam and Phishing

Avoiding spam and phishing

From email to instant messaging to social media, the Internet is an essential communication tool. Unfortunately, it's also popular among scammers and cybercriminals. To protect yourself from **email scams**, **malicious software**, and **identity theft**, you'll need to understand how to identify and avoid potentially dangerous content in your inbox, including **spam** and **phishing attempts**.

Watch the video below to learn more about spam and phishing.

Dealing with spam

If you've ever received unwanted email advertisements, you may already be familiar with **spam**, also known as **junk email**. Spam messages can clutter your inbox and make it more difficult to find the emails you actually want to read. Even worse, spam often includes **phishing scams** and **malware**, which can pose a serious risk to your computer. Fortunately, most email services now include several features to help you protect your inbox from spam.

Spam filters

Whenever you receive an email, most email providers will check to see if it's a real message or spam. Any likely spam messages will be placed in the **spam folder** so you don't accidentally open them when checking your email.

Spam-blocking systems aren't perfect, though, and there may be times when legitimate emails end up in your spam folder. We recommend checking your spam folder regularly to make sure you aren't missing any important emails.
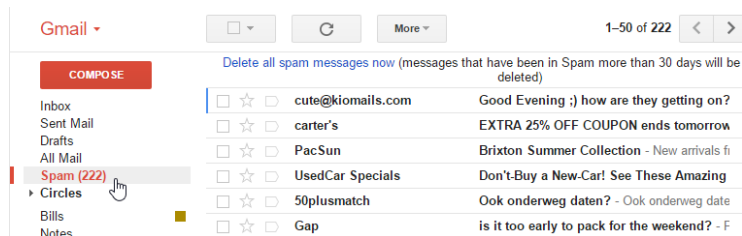

Many email services also have a feature you can use to **mark emails as spam**. In Gmail, for example, you can select the message and click the **Mark as Spam** button. This helps your email provider filter out these types of messages in the future.
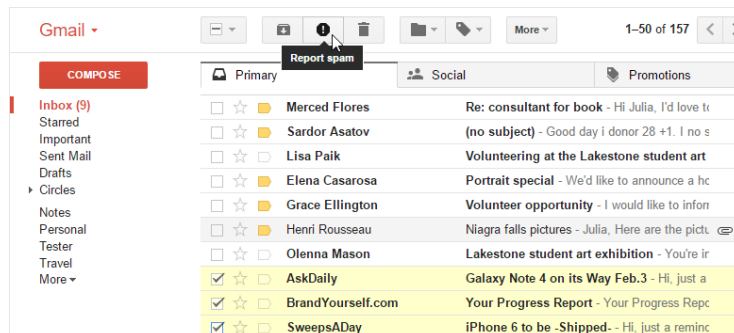
Turning off email images

Spam messages often contain **images** that the sender can track. When you open the email, the images will load and the spammer will be able to tell if your email works, which could result in even more spam. You can avoid this by **turning off email images**. Let's look at how to do this in Gmail, but remember that the process will vary depending on your email service.
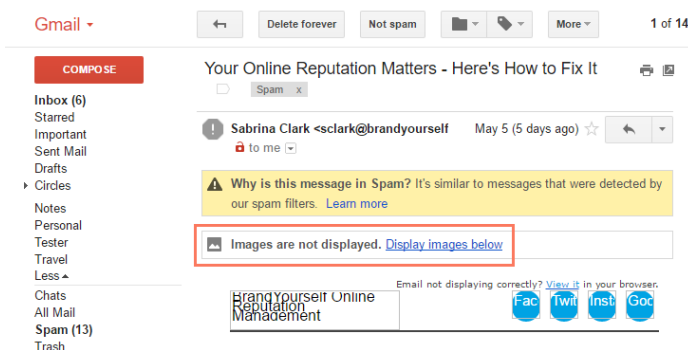
1. Click the **gear icon**, then select **Settings** from the drop-down menu.
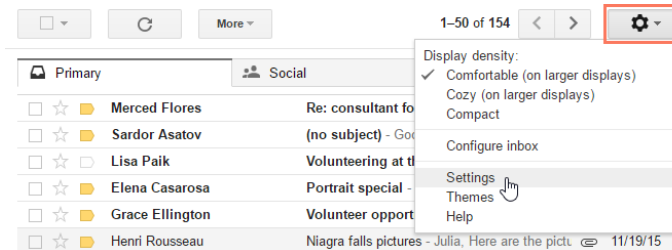
2. Select **Ask before displaying external images**, then click **Save** at the bottom.
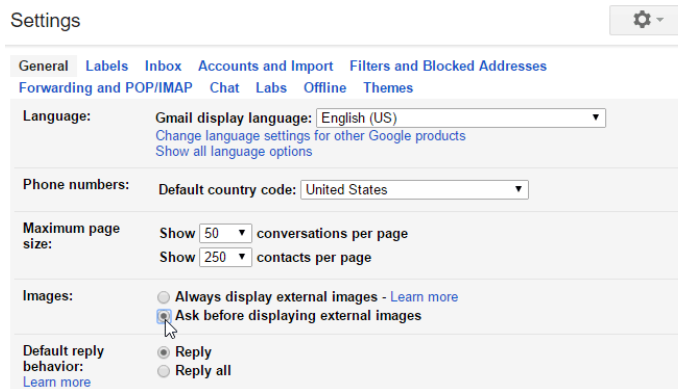
3. Whenever you open a message with images, Gmail will prevent them from loading by default.

Phishing

Phishing scams are messages that try to **trick you into providing sensitive information**. These often appear to come from a bank or another trusted source, and they'll usually want you to re-enter a password, verify a birth date, or confirm a credit card number. Phishing messages may look real enough at first glance, but it's surprisingly easy for scammers to create convincing details.

Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn more about identifying a phishing email.

From: "Bank of America" customerservice@bankofamercan.com
To: "Jane Smith" jane-smith12@gmail.com
Date: Wed, May 26, 2010
Subject: Fraud Alert – Action Required

Bank of America

Dear Customer,

At Bank of America, your satisfaction is our number one priority. We have recently added an Advanced Online Security option for our customers with online accounts. It is urgent that you go to our website and add Advanced Online Security to your account. Click on the following and update your information www.bankofamerica.com.

If you do not take these steps, in order to protect you, we will put a hold on your account, and you will be required to visit your local branch to verify your identity.

Thank you for helping us to make Bank of America the safest bank on the internet.

If you are receiving this message and you are not enrolled in online banking, sign up now. New online members will automatically be enrolled in the Advanced Online Security program.

Sincerely,

Bank of America Online Security Department

Logo Fraud

It's easy to make a **copy** of any logo. This one looks identical to Bank of America's official logo, but it doesn't make it any more authentic.

Other common email scams

Spam and phishing are common problems, but there are many other types of **email scams** you may encounter. Some will promise to give you a lot of money if you advance a small amount upfront. Others may pretend to be from people you know in real life, and they'll often ask you to send money or download an attached file.

As with spam and phishing scams, remember to **trust your best judgement**. You should **never send someone money** just because you've received an email request. You should also **never download email attachments you weren't expecting** because they might contain malware that could damage your computer and steal your personal information.

Spam, scams, and phishing schemes will continue to evolve and change. But now that you know what to look for—and what to avoid—you can keep your inbox and computer that much safer.