

Ten easy ways to make email more efficient

When you read and react to email as it arrives you could be losing time better spent on more important tasks. Start thinking about email strategically instead of responding instantly to every message. Here are ten ideas that can help make email a more productive business tool.



1 Put email in its place

For many of us, the most productive hours of the day are in the morning. But whenever you're at your most productive, don't let email intrude. Keep your most productive period of the day for your action items and projects. Schedule email instead of allowing it to schedule you.

2 Streamline response

When asking for help or assigning tasks send your request only to those directly involved—the one(s) with action items. When you include ancillary recipients it won't be clear who's responsible for handling your request. Keep others in the loop with a separate message, or simply forward the original with "FYI".

3 Break the chain

Stop forwarding email chains. Instead, take a few minutes to summarize what's important from the previous exchange. Just be sure your summary is accurate and includes the relevant level of detail. It will take more of your time, but will be more than offset by time savings for your recipients and your company.

4 Proof it

Once you hit the send button, your email is "live". Take a moment to read your message and make any adjustments for clarity, brevity, grammar, and spelling. With email, less is usually more—efficient and effective.

5 Can the spam

Even if you never open spam emails they waste your precious time. Every moment it takes to scan and evaluate subject lines and senders takes time away from something more important. Use your email application's rules and filters to send spam directly to the trash folder.

6 Do it now

Some messages are easier to deal with than others. But the best way to keep your inbox under control is to deal with messages as you read them. Whether you reply, delegate, or delete, try to deal with each one. You probably can't avoid deferring a few emails, but if you always try for closure your inbox will stay much more manageable.

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7 Schedule your response

Some emails don't require an immediate response. Yet you don't want them lingering in your inbox. When you're working through your emails write your response and schedule a delayed "send". In Outlook® select **Options** and check the box for **Do not deliver before** to schedule the date and time your response will be sent.

8 Create messages faster with templates

Instead of retyping repetitive information in emails, automate it. You can create multiple signatures and templates in Outlook and other email applications. If you need instructions, search the online Help to learn how to create, edit, and use these productive tools.

9 Use flags to categorize emails

In Outlook, a great method to keep track of emails is to flag them. Right-click on the flag icon of an email to mark it with a colored flag. Use a different colored flag for Action Items, Projects, or other categories. Then you can sort your emails by flag colors to quickly find the one(s) you need.

10 Create distribution lists

If you frequently send messages to the same group of people, you'll save time and effort if you set them up in a distribution list. If you need instructions, search the online Help of your email application to learn how to create, edit, and use distribution lists.



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