

How do I use email?



How do I use email? Email is extremely ubiquitous, and many of us have our methods for taming our inboxes.

I won't add to the legion of how-to articles specific to using email clients. In the following paragraphs, I will lay out my approach to keeping my inbox clean. My approach applies to any email client and applies to anyone that uses email. I am not saying any of my methods are rocket science. Some may benefit from these ideas along with myself as my approach progresses.

Filter All the Things



I make heavy use of filters to keep my sanity with the deluge of emails I get at work. I'm a [zero inboxer](#) and using filters helps me achieve my goal of inbox nirvana.

A Few Folders to Rule Them All

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In the beginning of my journey with email, I had a folder for everything. It was a complete cluster if I'm being honest. Over time I realized that having a few folders is plenty. I use a folder as a starting place for searches to narrow the scope of emails I'm searching for. If I'm looking for something it makes it much easier.

Accounts

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I have an accounts folder where I scurry any account-related emails. Within that accounts folder, I have a few big-ticket folders like Amazon, Insurance, and Orders. I have a filter that puts all the Amazon emails in that folder to make it easy to find old support correspondences.

Efforts

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As I work on things like replacing a fence, filing away emails about a car accident, or other fun efforts, I throw them in a subfolder of the Efforts folder. It helps me find past discussions and follow up on the effort as it moves through my workflows.

People

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I have a folder for any correspondences I have with friends, family, colleagues, etc. If people are a big part of my life, I have a special folder just for them.

Jobs

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As an employee of the tech industry, I get quite a bit of recruiter mail. I ferret away any of those emails for safekeeping if any Bad Things Happen ™.

Notifications

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I keep most of my content consumption in [Inoreader](#) by way of RSS feeds. In some cases, no RSS exists so notifications from systems like GitHub, Trello, and other software go in there. I keep the email notifications to a minimum and prefer app notifications to email.

Email is My Business

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Using tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams has helped me tame my inbox. Chatter lives in Slack; actions live in Trello, formal communications live in my inbox. If there's anything I need to act upon, I'll create a Trello card from my email client and Slack. It helps me separate the concerns and keep myself sane with the high volume of communications I deal with daily.

I Keep 'em Separated

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I'm using a handful of email accounts for distinct roles I play. My inboxes are single responsibility inboxes. I have one for work, I have one for myself, my family, and some for various side projects I work on.

I create a new email account for every job and use that email account to access software tools I use at work. If the tools are internal tools that I'll never use at a new job, I'll log in to tools with my work email. When I was doing consulting, and I switched jobs potentially within months or less, this method helped me separate my concerns and avoid email chaos.

Conclusion

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I'll update this post as my approach changes. It's simply an accounting of my approach to email as a tool. If you benefit from this approach, then great, if not share your approach or tell me why mine is wrong. □

It's not rocket science. □

