Gmail: Tips for a tidy inbox

Are you lost in your inbox? Are you spending hours in a maze of folders? That sounds like a lot of work! What if your inbox was always empty so you could focus on the important stuff? That's right, we said empty!

Setting it up

Create labels

Before you can put our tips into practice, you'll want to set up two labels to help you organize your email: *Action* and *Awaiting response*.

1. Sign in to your Gmail account.
2. On the left side of the window, click More.
3. Click Create new label.
4. Type *Action* as the label name and click Create.
5. Repeat those steps again creating a label with the name *Awaiting response*. 
Change the color of your labels

Changing the color of your labels makes them stand out. To change the color of the label:

1. Hover over the color to the right of a label name.
2. Click the **More options** arrow.
3. Click **Label color**.
4. Select a color.

Clean out old mail

To get a fresh start, consider archiving all of your older email messages.

1. Search for all messages in your inbox you received before this month. In the search bar, type: `in:inbox before:yyyy/mm/dd` where the date represents last month.
2. Select all the messages that appear in the search results by selecting the checkbox above the results.
3. Click the **Select all conversations that match this search** link.
4. Click the **Archive** button.
Launching it in your inbox

Here are some additional ways you can keep your inbox tidy and always empty:

1. Read each conversation only once.
2. Pick one of three actions to take:
   a. Move the conversation to the Action label if you need to do something. Once you've completed the related action, archive the conversation.
   b. Move the message to the Awaiting response label if someone else needs to do something. Once they have completed their action, archive the conversation.
   c. Archive the message if you don't need to do anything.

Best practices

Here are a few tips to help you stay organized in your inbox:

- **Use your Action label as your to-do list.** Review it on a regular basis.
- **Enable the Multiple Inboxes lab to show items with your Action and Awaiting response labels in your inbox.** As you complete your tasks throughout the day, watch these lists shrink.
- **Enable the superstars lab to organize conversations even further.** For example, you can add purple stars to items in your Action label you need to complete today.
- **Use search to find messages, instead of labels.** You really don't need many labels because search is so powerful. Don't spend time organizing messages into labels, spend time becoming a power searcher instead. Learn more about search in [this document](#).

Find more tips, ideas, and training at the **Google Apps Learning Center**!  
[learn.googleapps.com](http://learn.googleapps.com)