

Inbox Magic-Taking Control of Your Inbox

Some Productivity Tips

Don't be a Slave to Your E-Mail:

- When you start your day don't open your e-mail unless your most important task of the day needs information that's supposed to be in your inbox today.
- If possible, turn off all e-mail notifications including popups and chimes. They're distracting and probably not essential to the work at hand.
- Don't read your e-mail more than two or three times a day unless your job success is highly dependent upon it. Try to read your messages at periods of low energy.
- When reading your messages do one of the following until your inbox is empty:
 - Reply if the reply is short.
 - If the reply takes more than a few sentences, call the sender and resolve the message.
 - Walk to the sender's office for a short meeting to resolve the message (this is great exercise).
 - File it for reference.
 - Delete it.

Taking Control of Your Inbox is a Two-Step Process

1. Perform a radical housecleaning
2. Set up a system to keep your inbox clean and to keep on top of your mail

Strategies for the Radical Housecleaning

There are several ways in which you can clean up an exploding inbox.

- You can sort by subject in alphabetical order and go through your list of messages and delete the junk mail.
- You can sort by chronological order and create folders for each of the years you have messages for. This eats up server space but provides one of the quickest ways to clean out your inbox without throwing anything away.
- You can sort chronologically and delete all but the last three years of messages.
- You can sort by sender and create a folder for each of those people reporting to you or whom you converse with on a regular basis.

Creating and Using Categories as a Filtering Mechanism

- Categories are often thought of as just something to make your calendar look nice but there's a deeper and very effective use for categories. First, you can create categories to fit YOUR needs. Categories can be customized specifically for your use.
- Modifying categories is easy. Here's how you can do it. Click on the "Category" button in the Home Ribbon. Select "Edit" and "Categorize." Select a color and click on rename. Do this for as many colors and categories you find a need for.
- If you categorize each "non-junk" message you can sort by color and move them to the appropriate folder or create a rule (to be covered later) to move them.

Examples of categories might be:

Action Item	Personal	Errands	Project (or project name)
Teaching (or courses)	Reference	Business	Collaboration

In any case, whatever you decide should mirror your folder system for storing. Categories are just another way to help you keep your inbox clean.

Strategies for a Folder System

A few suggestions:

- Action Mail for those messages that need attention but you may not have the time to do so now. If you can't take care of it in two minutes put it in an Action folder for later. There is a better system for this using flags, a topic for later.
- Annual Archive
 - Create a folder called "Archive" and under it create folders to store each year of your messages. This way you'll always have access to them.
 - It is suggested that you keep no more than three years in reserve. As another year is added, remove the oldest year. This will save server space.
 - If you want to save the messages older than three years, save them to some type of removable media like CD, DVD, or flash drive.
 - Personal folder-for messages from family, friends, etc.
 - By project
 - EDU-122
 - Ignatian Scholarship Day

- Under the Dome
- Exchange 2010

Moving Messages from Your Inbox to a Folder

- **Drag and Drop**-is probably the simplest method. Once you've collected (sorted/filtered/grouped) like messages, you can select all and then drag them to the desired folder.
- **Move to a Folder**-similar to drag and drop but the computer moves them for you.
- **Create Rules**-automatically moves messages from your inbox to a folder without your intervention. Folders containing unread items will appear in bold-faced font and have a number in parenthesis to the right of it indicating how many messages you have that are unread.

The first two methods should be familiar to you and are fairly self-explanatory. Here's a tip to help you do these two faster. To select a group of messages next to each other hold down the shift key and click on the first message in the group. While still holding down the shift key, click on the last message in the group to be moved. You should now have several contiguous messages selected. Simply Drag them to the desired folder or use the move function.

To select several messages that are not next to each other hold down the control key and single-left click of each message you want to move to a folder. Then drag or move them.

Creating Rules

There are a couple of different ways to create rules. I'll outline the simplest one here.

- Click on the message you'd like to create a rule for.
- Click on **Tools** and then click on **Rules and Alerts**. The Rules and Alerts window opens.
- You should see a **Rule Description** box at the bottom of the window. Also notice that there are instructions for editing the rule in this same box.
- If you'd like the message, and others like it, to go to a specific folder click on the inbox folder (the default) and select a new folder. N.B. if you haven't already created the folder, do so before you use the rule function.
- **Save** the rule.

Creating a New Rule from Scratch

- As before, click on **Tools** and select **Rules and Alerts**.
- Click on the **New Rule** button in the upper left corner opening a new window.
- From this menu you have numerous choices on how to manage your incoming mail. This may seem confusing at first but after a while you'll find it very useful.
- Note that no mail will be lost if you check the proper boxes so be careful. Most mistakes can be corrected if a rule is misapplied.

So now that we created rules for all of our incoming messages, how do I read them?

1. This is a good question. Any messages that come into your inbox will most likely go directly to one of your folders. You'll never see them in your inbox. Scary isn't it? Well, as mentioned above, folders with messages that are unread will be in **bold-faced** type. You'll also see a number to the right of each of these folders indicating the number of messages unread.
2. You could go into each of these folders and read your messages (from folder to folder) or click on the **unread mail** link in the navigation panel of Outlook. This will allow you to read and respond to ALL of your messages. This is the easy way.