

27

EMAIL HACKS

————— *that'll make you* —————

**MORE PRODUCTIVE**

# INTRODUCTION

According to a report by [McKinsey Global Institute](#), workers spend 28% of the work week reading and responding to emails.

**That means you lose 13 hours of work each week to email.**

Another [study by UC Irvine](#) found that office workers switched windows an average of 18 times each hour when they didn't have access to email -- but 36 times per hour when they did. Habitual task-switching can make us feel productive, but studies have shown that this practice in fact **reduces productivity by as much as 40 percent**.

So you could just practice restraint, stop checking email so much, and get more work done. Problem is, willpower is a finite resource. And every act of self-control, like trying to remember to respond to Alicia's email, leaves us with **decreasing willpower** throughout the day. But when we develop productivity rituals that eventually become automatic -- or technology hacks that already are -- we're able to expend less energy on them and more energy on the things that really matter.

To unburden ourselves from the weight of email overload, there are three things we can do. First, each individual needs to establish a framework that works for them to systematically reduce the time it takes to manage email. Second, when we do open our email, we need to be strategic about how we draft content and manage replies. And finally, we might have to rely on technology and hacks to make all of this just a little more efficient -- we'll outline Gmail-specific tech hacks you can apply to your inbox at the end of this ebook.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

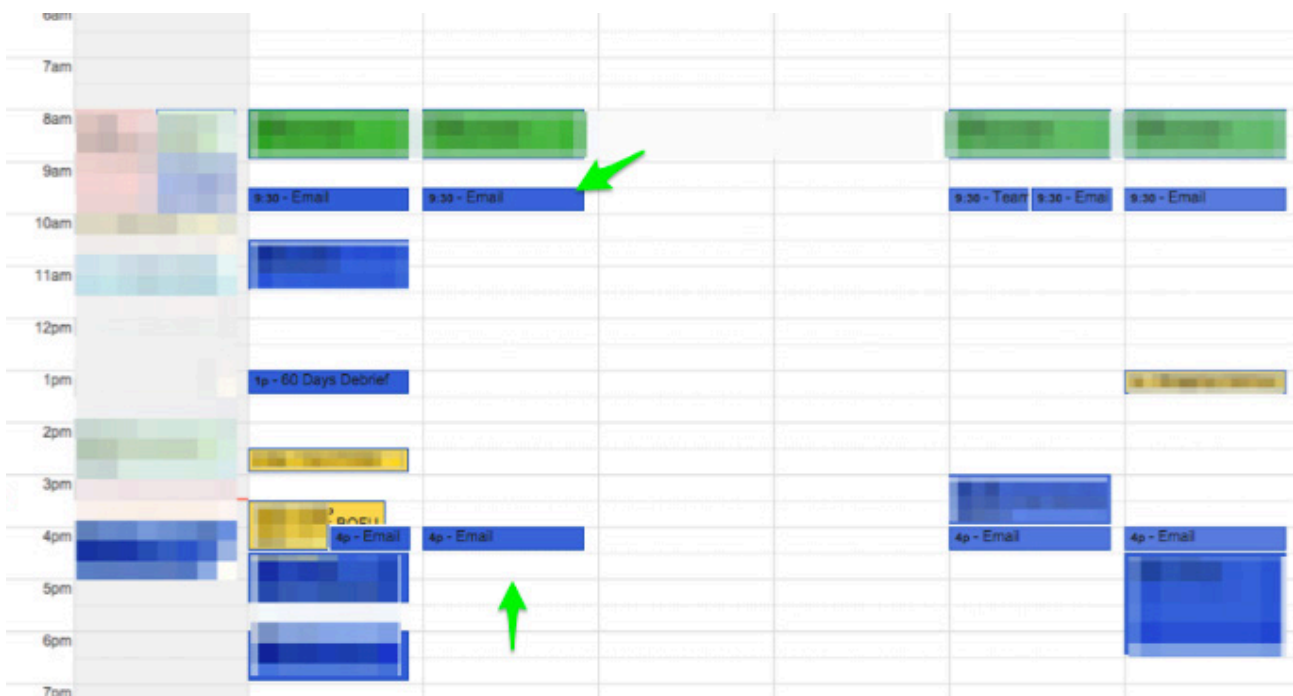
- 1** Productivity Techniques to Minimize Time Spent on Email
- 2** Writing Better Emails, Faster
- 3** Handy Little Gmail Hacks for More Productive Inbox Management

# PRODUCTIVITY TECHNIQUES TO MINIMIZE TIME SPENT ON EMAIL

## TECHNIQUE 1: BATCHING

Read and respond to your emails only twice a day. To get started, monitor your emails for one day without responding to get a picture of when your inbox is busiest. Log into your account once every hour, record how many emails are in your inbox, and note the two hours of the day when your inbox is most active.

Then, create a schedule around your peak hours, and only check your email at those times:



## TECHNIQUE 2: O.H.I.O (ONLY HOLD IT ONCE)

Eric Schmidt uses the **O.H.I.O. (“Only Hold It Once”)** method. This means Schmidt immediately responds to emails that take less than two minutes, so he’s not revisiting small tasks multiple times.

For example, if you have an email from a prospect asking to confirm a meeting time, respond to it now. But if you get an email with a long series of questions, finish what you’re working on now before you switch gears.

## TECHNIQUE 3: THE 3-FOLDER EMAIL SYSTEM

It’s no surprise the founder of Lifehacker, Gina Trapani, has a system in place to minimize email as a disruptive force. Use her 3-Folder Email System to better categorize your emails, and by extension, your to-do list.

The “Follow up” folder is for emails that require a reply; “Hold” is for messages to be handled in the future; and “Archive” is for emails that don’t need a response.

“*Don’t leave work until your inbox has less than 50 emails.*”

## TECHNIQUE 4: THE <50, <24 RULE

It’s hard to fathom what a billion dollars really looks like, and thus, it’s hard to say what you’d do with that kind of money if you had it. Same goes for your inbox. It’s hard to get your arms around an inbox with 1,000 emails in it.

To keep your inbox under control, it has to feel psychologically manageable. So put yourself on a 30-day challenge in which for 30 days, you don’t leave work until your inbox has less than 50 emails (that’s one page in a Gmail inbox), and everyone has received a response in less than 24 hours (business days -- if you get an email on a weekend, reply Monday).

After 30 days, you'll not only be caught up if you started as a laggard, but you'll never end a day or start a morning feeling like your inbox is a beast that cannot possibly be tamed. The time you spend on email management will decrease if you force yourself to keep the volume under a certain threshold on a daily basis.

## TECHNIQUE 5: ONE MONTH OF UNSUBSCRIBES

For one full month, unsubscribe from email lists and notifications with ruthless abandon. That should provide enough time for you to get to all of the email lists you're on and make a decision to keep, or unsubscribe.

No archiving or deleting just to clear it out -- every email you see, for one month, you must make a decision on whether to keep getting that email going forward, or not.

An application called [Unroll.me](#) can help you combine all the clutter you receive on a daily basis. This is great for consolidating all those newsletters you still want to get, but don't want to have to keep organizing.

“*Unsubscribe from email lists and notifications with ruthless abandon.*”

## TECHNIQUE 6: SPRINT AND REST

Work in 90-minute sprints, punctuated by 15-10 minutes of “rest period” in your email inbox.

Physiologist [Nathaniel Kleitman](#), the pioneering sleep researcher who co-discovered REM sleep, is also well known for observing that humans alternate progressively between light and deep sleep in 90-minute periods. According to a [Harvard Business Review article](#) by Tony Schwartz, Kleitman found that we operate by that same 90-minute rhythm during the day by moving progressively through periods of higher and lower alertness.

After working at high intensity for more than 90 minutes, we begin relying on stress hormones for energy. The result: Our prefrontal cortex starts to shut down and we start losing our ability to think clearly and reflectively. You can better manage your time at work by respecting the human need for rhythmic pulses of rest and renewal, and schedule time for low-stress tasks like email triage and inbox management for after those 90-minute periods of active work that require high levels of alertness.

“*Schedule time for low-stress tasks like email triage and inbox management.*”

## **TECHNIQUE 7: DUHIGG’S CUES AND REWARDS**

Every time you have an urge and you do something about it, the reward you get from it (whether it’s a tobacco high from smoking or the satisfaction of knowing you’re at inbox zero) creates a neurological pathway in your brain. When you repeat that action and experience the same reward again, that neurological pathway gets a little bit thicker; and the next time, even thicker. The thicker that pathway gets, the easier it is for impulses to travel down it.

So when you try to extinguish a habit completely -- like, say, checking your email constantly -- you’re actually trying to use willpower to destroy a neural pathway. So if you’re having trouble eliminating that email-checking habit, here’s what Charles Duhigg suggests you do:

- 1.** Diagnose the “cue” or the urge that sets off the habit
- 2.** Diagnose the reward you get from doing that habit
- 3.** Replace your habit with an activity that’s both triggered by the old cue and delivers the old reward, or a version of it.

So if you have a bad habit of checking your email every 30 minutes, first, diagnose the cue. Ask yourself questions like: What time is it when you feel the urge to check email? Where are you? Who else is around? What were you doing right before? Ah, that's it! You realize it's become a habit for you to check email right after you check Facebook because they're next to each other in your bookmark bar.

Now, diagnose the reward. What craving does reading email satisfy? Maybe it's the satisfaction of knowing nothing in the inbox is bold, and thus no emergencies could be in there for you to discover later. Figure out what satisfies you about that habit, and then replace it with something that will make you more productive. In this case, I might set up an autoresponder letting people know I'll respond to emails in less than 24 hours, but they can reach me by phone for time-sensitive emergencies.

## TECHNIQUE 8: SCAN-BLOCK-ASK

Email is a very common and important form of communication for many workers, so bypassing it altogether until you've worked through your own to-do list isn't always feasible. This is where the Scan-Block-Ask system comes into play:

- 1. SCAN** your inbox for urgent and important items in the morning, then close your inbox and open your actual to-do list.
- 2. BLOCK** time on your calendar for processing email. Schedule appointments at times that make sense for you each day. Sometimes you'll get through your inbox in 30 minutes, and other times it will take longer. And if you ever get stuck "doing email" ...
- 3. ASK** yourself if it's the best use of your time right now. Most of the time the answer will be no. This process allows you to put email in the place on your to-do list.



## TECHNIQUE 9: INBOX TRIAGE

You may have heard the word “triage” as it relates to the emergency room, but here’s a brief history lesson. The concept of medical triage was developed during Napoleonic Wars by Napoleon’s chief surgeon, [Dominique Jean Larrey](#). He came up with the process to determine the priority of wounded patients’ treatment based on their condition.

Patients were grouped into three categories:

1. Those who are likely to die, regardless of what care they received
2. Those who are likely to live, regardless of what care they received
3. Those for whom immediate care might make a positive difference in outcome

The “die” patients would be given morphine and made as comfortable as possible. The “live” patients would be quickly stitched up, cleaned up, and moved out. This allowed the doctors to spend the bulk of their time to work on difficult cases and really save people.

As with injured patients, you can categorize and respond to your emails in a similar way:

1. Those that should be deleted/archived in bulk (the “die” bucket). Ex: Promotional emails and social notifications.

- 2.** Those that should be dealt with quickly (the “stitch up and move on” bucket). Ex: A calendar invite that you simply need to RSVP to or an email that you can respond to briefly and without further research.
  
- 3.** Those that require actual work. Ex: A message from a client or colleague that will require information gathering, a long-form response, or other substantial work.

# WRITING BETTER EMAILS, FASTER

Even with established systems to make email triage and inbox management less time consuming, the stress of actually drafting an email or email response can add significant time to people's work days. There's a buffet of techniques for those that experience email writer's block that can make this process less painful, and most importantly, less time-consuming.

## FORWARD RUTHLESSLY.

First and foremost, consider whether you need to spend time on writing an email at all.

If an email isn't meant for you, or you're not the best person to answer the question, forward it to the right person immediately instead of making yourself the problem solver, or even the intermediary.

There's a tendency for good workers to be helpful people, and that extends to the inbox. How that manifests itself, however, is that worker trying to solve a problem that isn't their problem to solve -- this is the worst case scenario. So please, forward with ruthless abandon.

The less-worse-scenario is that worker stays on the chain, even after they've forwarded the email to someone else -- cluttering their inbox, even if no responsibility remains with them. If this happens, speak up and let someone know you should be removed from the chain entirely.

## ADOPT JEFF HOFFMAN'S ABOVE-THE-FOLD RULE.

Mark Twain once said, "I didn't have time to write a shorter letter, so I wrote a long one instead."

A simple email-writing trick from sales trainer [Jeff Hoffman](#) that will force you to shorten your emails without slowing you down is using your mobile to draft. As soon as you hit the “fold,” stop writing.



Using your phone’s screen as a boundary will ensure you write short, to-the-point messages. And this is important when less than 30% of recipients [deem long emails acceptable](#), and mobile email open rates have increased by more than 300% since 2011.

In other words, there’s a very good chance your recipient will be reading your email on their phone.

*“Mobile email open rates have increased by more than 300% since 2011.”*

## USE PRE-WRITTEN REPLIES.

Which types of emails do you find yourself typing out over and over, without really needing to customize them?

Give yourself ten minutes back keeping pre-written replies handy for those types of messages. Many email clients -- Gmail and Outlook included -- even have canned responses features to automate it.

### To Set Up Canned Responses in Gmail:

1. Click the gear icon in the upper right-hand corner and choose “Settings.”
2. Click the “Labs” tab, find Canned Responses at the top, and click “Enable.” Scroll down and click “Save Changes.”

To create a canned response, compose a new email and click the little arrow in the bottom right-hand corner of the new email. Choose “Canned responses,” and then “New canned response.” From there, you can name your new canned response, write it, and save it. Anytime you want to use it, simply go back to that little arrow, choose “Canned responses,” and click on the one you’d like to use. (Learn more [on Google’s website.](#))

### To Set Up Canned Responses in Outlook:

In Outlook, you can set up your canned responses as “Signatures.” That way, when you reply to an email, you can choose the appropriate “signature” and the whole canned reply will appear.

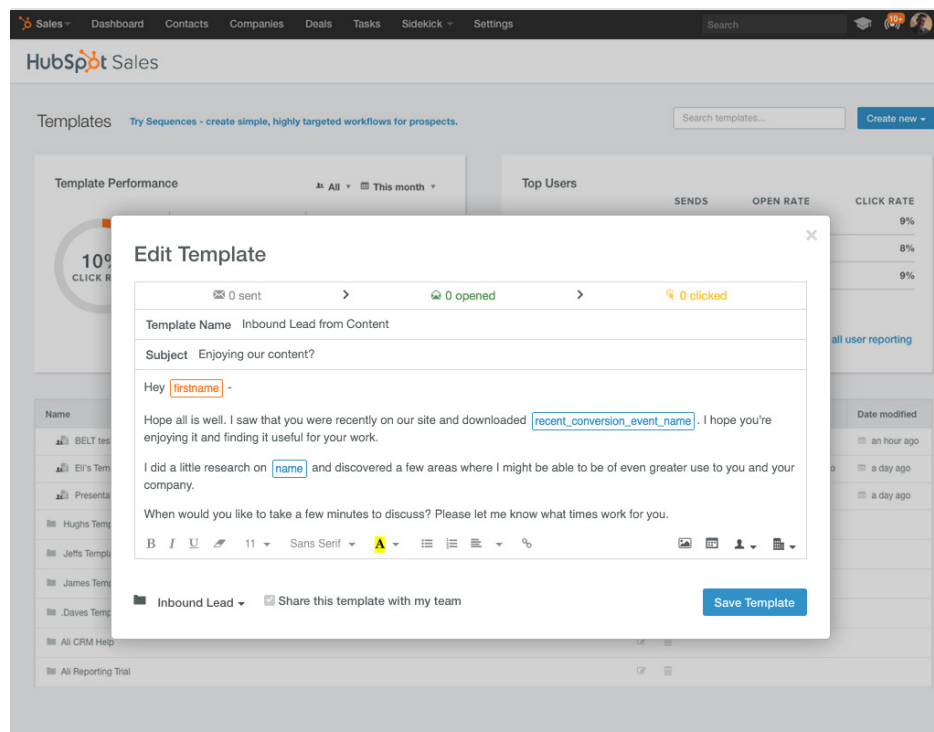
1. On the Outlook menu, click “Preferences.” Under “E-mail,” click “Signatures.”
2. Click the plus icon to add a new signature.
3. A new signature will appear under “Signature name” with the label “Untitled.” Double-click “Untitled,” and then type in a new name for your canned response.
4. In the right pane, type the text that you want to include in the signature -- in other words, type in your canned response.

Once you create the canned response as a signature, you can add it to a new email by clicking in the message body, choosing the “Message” tab, clicking “Signatures,” and choosing a signature from the list. (Learn more [on Outlook’s support page.](#))

## WORK OFF OF TEMPLATES WHEN DRAFTING EMAILS.

Just as canned responses can save you time in email replies, drafting net-new emails can be made faster if you have templates to work with. There’s a host of common email types: RFPs, guest blogging outreach, comarketing participation requests, lunch requests, etc. Next time you draft one, keep a copy of it for yourself so you have something to work off of later. This should help remove the writer’s block that can plague those without the digital version of the gift of gab.

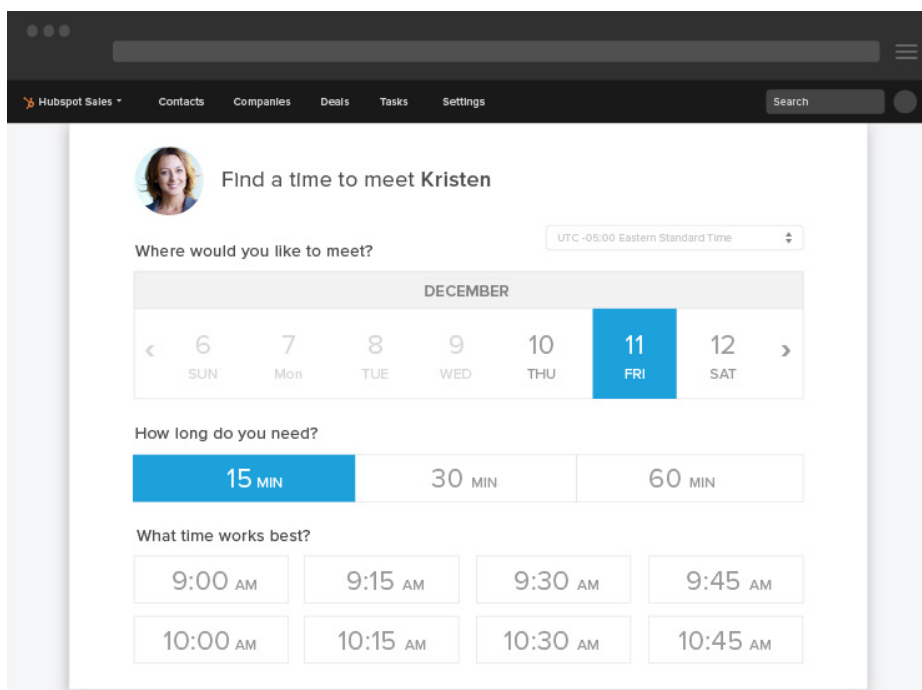
You may also find email copy templates you can use from a quick online search. If you’re looking for sales email templates, for example, [we’ve got a library of templates in HubSpot Sales that you and your entire team can access.](#)



# USE TECHNOLOGY TO BOOK YOUR MEETINGS FOR YOU.

Just as templates and canned responses remove some of the time of repetitive tasks, there are ways to automate certain inbox tasks -- chief of which is calendar management. Instead of engaging in email back-and-forth to book meetings, use technology to help you automate that process.

For example, [HubSpot Sales](#) users can enable their prospects to book time on their calendar automatically, instead of engaging in a bevy of “what about next Tuesday?” emails. Set your availability in the software, and let anyone set an appointment with you via a personalized booking link.



# 3

## HANDY LITTLE GMAIL HACKS FOR MORE PRODUCTIVE INBOX MANAGEMNET

### COMMON KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Move between messages within a conversation:

While viewing a conversation, use the n & p keys on your keyboard to jump to the next message (n) or the previous (p) message in the thread. To expand or collapse a message, simply click Enter.

Select message recipients:

- Add cc recipient: CTRL + Shift + c
- Add bcc recipient: CTRL + Shift + b
- Change From Address: CTRL + Shift + f (Only works if you have enabled additional sending addresses.)

These are only a few of the automatically enabled shortcuts that Gmail offers. You can visit the [Keyboard Shortcuts](#) Help page for the full list of keyboard commands.

You can also enable more advanced keyboard shortcuts by clicking on the gear icon, selecting Settings from the drop down menu, and selecting “Keyboard shortcuts on” in the General Settings page.

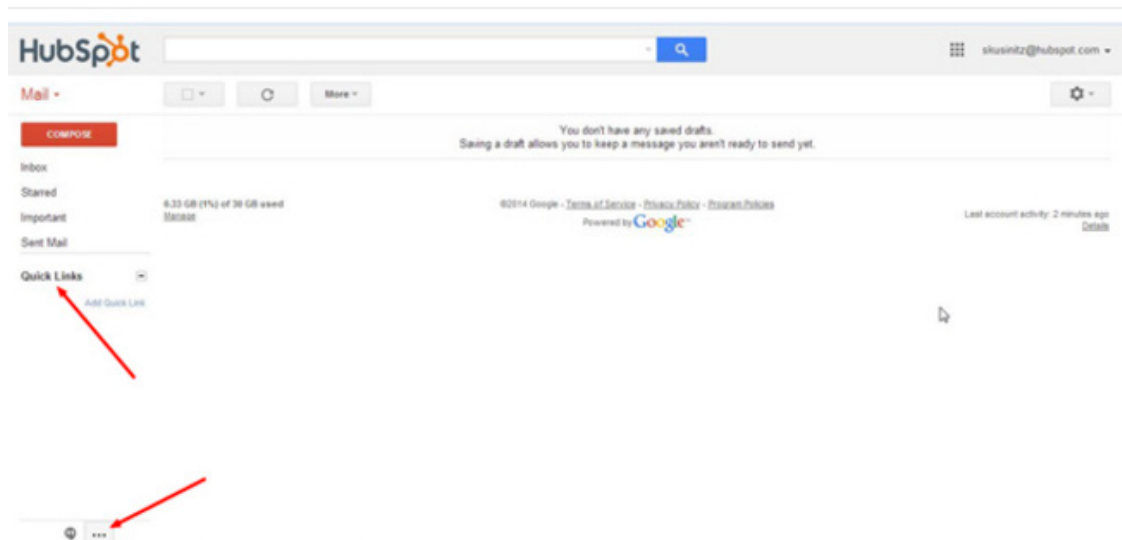


## FIND ATTACHMENTS

If you're searching for an attachment within your emails, you can easily segment your search results to include only emails with attachments by inputting the code "has:attachment" to your search query. This will make it much easier to find those attachments buried in your inbox.

## QUICK LINKS

This feature allows you to store all of the emails, searches, and settings that you access regularly so you can quickly find them at any time with one click. If you constantly find yourself searching for the same emails, you can enable this feature by clicking on the gear icon in the top right hand corner of Gmail and selecting Settings from the dropdown menu. Then, click the Labs tab at the top of the settings page and search for Quick Links. Once enabled, you can access the Quick Links feature by clicking on the ellipsis icon, which is located in the left-hand sidebar next to the Gchat icon.



## SEND AND ARCHIVE

Clean up your inbox by using the send and archive setting. In order to turn this setting on, go to Settings by clicking on the gear icon in the upper right hand corner of the page. Scroll down on the General Settings page to the “Send and Archive” section and select the “Show Send & Archive button in reply” option.

Once you’ve enabled this setting, any time you reply to a message, you’ll see the “Send & Archive” button. This will help your inbox remain decluttered, while keeping important messages searchable.

## UNDO SEND

It’s happened to everyone: You finish writing an email, hit send, and immediately realize you made a mistake and wish more than anything that you could take back the email.

If this setting is turned on, every time you send an email, a yellow bar will appear at the top of the page that provides you the chance to undo the send. To enable this life-saving feature, go to the Labs page within Settings. Search for the feature titled “Undo Send,” enable it, and save your changes by scrolling down to the bottom of the page.

## QUICKER LOADING

If you add the code “/?ui=html” to the end of the Gmail URL, you will load Gmail in basic mode, stripping the javascript coding. This little trick makes your Gmail load instantaneously (though it won’t be as pretty).

## FILTER OUT UNWANTED EMAILS

If you find yourself regularly receiving emails from an unwanted sender, you can take advantage of this setting to keep their emails from entering your inbox.

To enable this setting, simply open up an email from the sender whose emails you no longer want to receive, select the more icon (the upside-down arrow) and choose the “filter messages like this” option from the drop down menu. Then, you will be able to customize exactly what you want to do with emails from that particular address.

You can select to have their emails automatically marked as read, archived, or deleted before they reach your inbox.

## STAR FUNCTION

The star function in Gmail can be used to mark an important email or as a reminder that an email requires further action. To be super organized, you can enable multiple types of stars so you can use different stars to indicate different properties or degrees of importance.

To enable multiple stars, go to the gear icon in the top right corner of your screen, select Settings from the drop down menu, and scroll down to the “Stars” section on the General Settings page. Then, all you have to do is drag stars from the “Not in use” section to the “In use” section and save your changes at the bottom of the page.

“*The average person loses 13 hours of work each week to email.*”

## SMARTLABELS

The Smartlabels feature automatically categorizes incoming messages based on predetermined labels to help you stay organized.

You can enable this feature by returning to Labs. Search for “Smartlabels,” select enable, and save your changes. Once you’ve turned this setting on, you can view your smartlabels under “categories” to the left of your Gmail inbox.

## **MAIL TIMER ADD-ON**

If you think you're spending too much time responding to emails each day, this add-on is perfect for you. With Mail Timer, you can designate the amount of time that you want to allow yourself to spend answering emails. As soon as you open an email, the timer will begin. When the time runs out, you'll receive a pop-up notification suggesting that you move on to your next task.

## **MUTE NOTIFICATIONS**

if your habit is to check your email inbox every time you see an incoming message then you are still being ruled by your email -- or perhaps those frameworks in Chapter 1 haven't made their way into your daily routine yet.

Luckily, there are settings within many email providers that allow you to turn off notifications and sounds temporarily so that you can remove the email temptation. In Gmail, turning notifications off is as simple as clicking the gear icon in the upper right-hand corner, selecting Settings, scrolling down to Desktop Notifications and disabling chat notifications and mail notifications by selecting the corresponding radio buttons.

(And yes, this section is dedicated to Gmail hacks, but if you're In Outlook, go to File, Options, Mail, and scroll down to the Message Arrival section where you can un-check all of the notification options, essentially turning off any and all distracting notifications for the time being.)

## **DELETE RECURRING EMAILS WHEN OOO**

We're all on various internal email distribution lists, and many of them are time-based and therefore irrelevant by the time you're back in the office.

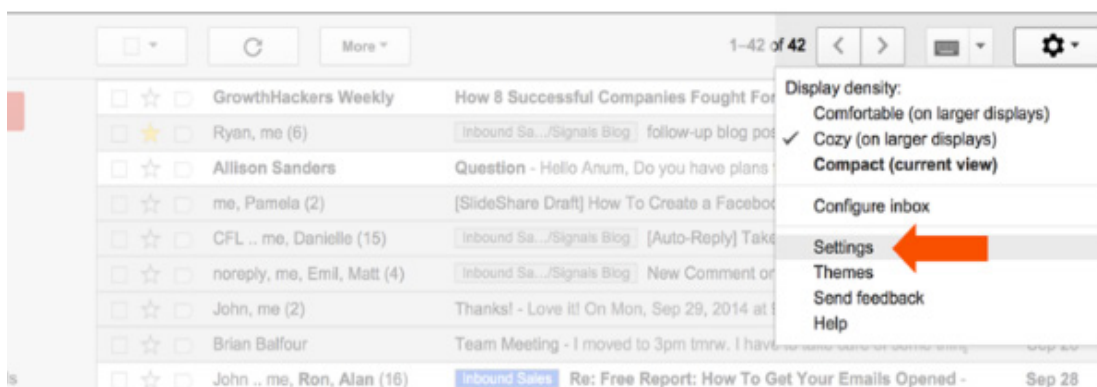
Create a filter calling out specific words that appear in the emails that will be out-of-date by the time you return. For these emails, apply a rule to have them deleted automatically instead of routed to another folder or inbox.

## MULTIPLE INBOXES

Finally, the apex of Gmail inbox organization hacks -- organizing your inbox into multiple sub-inboxes that correspond to the way you've found best allows you to remain productive and stay on top of email. Whether that's organizing your inbox by the action you need to take, the product being discussed in a multi-product organization, or even level of importance, if you'd like to be able to triage your email in this way, here's how to set it up:

*“Sub-inboxes allow you to remain productive and stay on top of email.”*

Click the gear icon at the top right of your primary Gmail inbox. Under the dropdown that appears, select “Settings.”

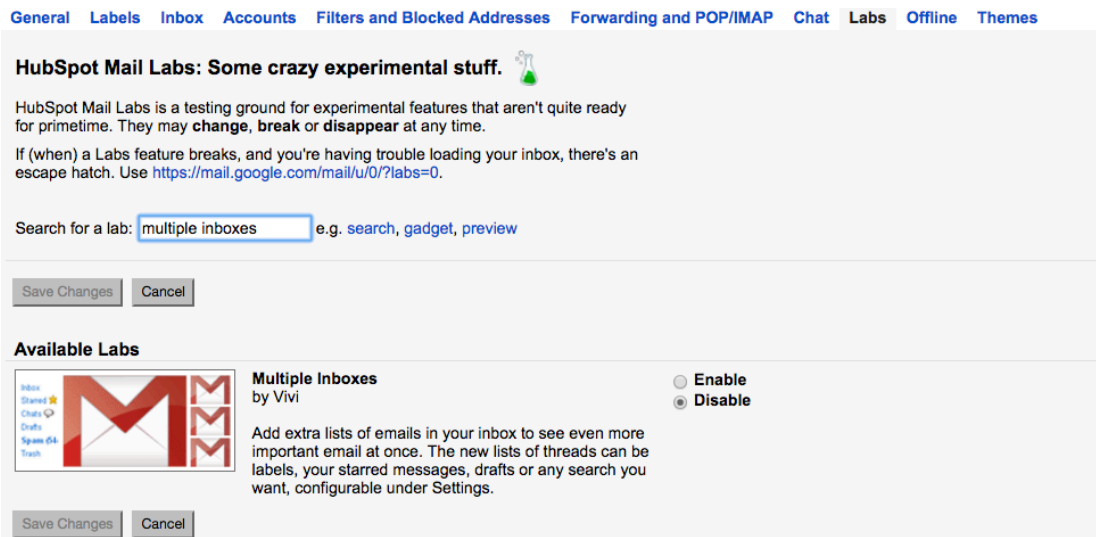


In the top navigation that appears, click “Labs.”

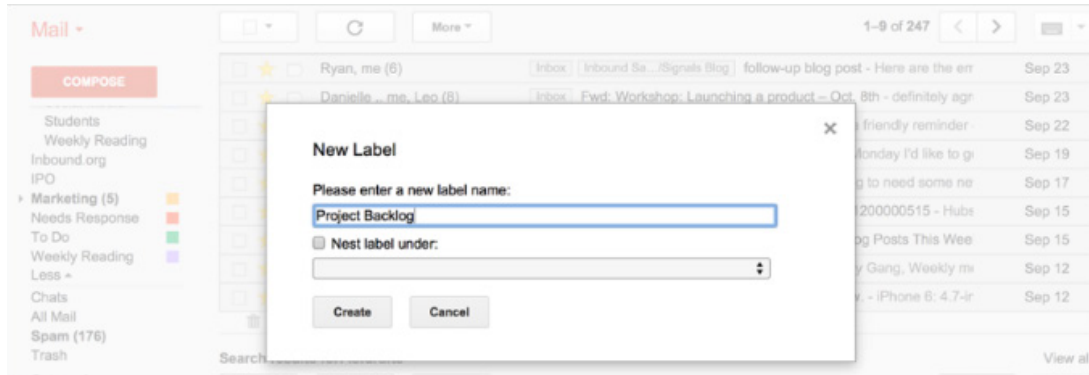


Search for “Multiple Inboxes,” and select “Enable.”

Be sure to click “save changes,” after which Gmail will automatically redirect you back to your inbox.



Then, create labels for each email type you’d like to bucket. In the left-side panel of your inbox, you’ll find all your labels under the “Compose” button. By scrolling down to “Create New Label,” you can create the various groups you’d like to bucket your different email types into.



With your labels created, navigate back to “Settings.” You may not find that gear icon to get to your settings on your new screen anymore -- that’s because you haven’t finished setting up the new inbox real estate. For now, scroll down until you see the gear icon. Navigate back to your Settings, and this time click “Multiple Inboxes” in the top navigation.



Now, set the labels you’d like to appear in your inboxes. Under “Current searches for the multiple inboxes,” input the additional inboxes you’d like in your inbox. In order to properly display these inboxes, be sure to use the format “is:label-name.” Your queries will need to be lower-case and use dashes instead of spaces.

**Current searches for the multiple inboxes:**  
(leaving any of the boxes empty will remove thread panels from your inbox view. Removing all the searches will remove all the hotlist panels.)

	Search query	Panel title (optional)
Pane 0:	<input type="text" value="is:needs-response"/>	<input type="text" value="Needs Response"/>
Pane 1:	<input type="text" value="is:project-backlog"/>	<input type="text" value="Project Backlog"/>
Pane 2:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Pane 3:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Pane 4:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Maximum page size: Show  conversations per page for the new inbox panes

Extra panels positioning:

- Right side of the inbox
- Above the inbox
- Below the inbox

You can also select the max number of emails that can appear in each inbox at a time, similar to how Gmail automatically displays 50 emails per page in your primary inbox.

Click “Save Changes” to head back to your organized inbox.



# HUBSPOT EMAIL

## AN END TO INEFFECTIVE EMAILS

You shouldn't have to put on battle gear to get your email to look just right. HubSpot makes email layout easier. Build your content, preview it live, and feel confident before you send. Without leaving HubSpot's software you can segment your list, remove duplicates, and even tailor your emails to each recipient to make them more relevant.

### ✓ GROW YOUR LIST

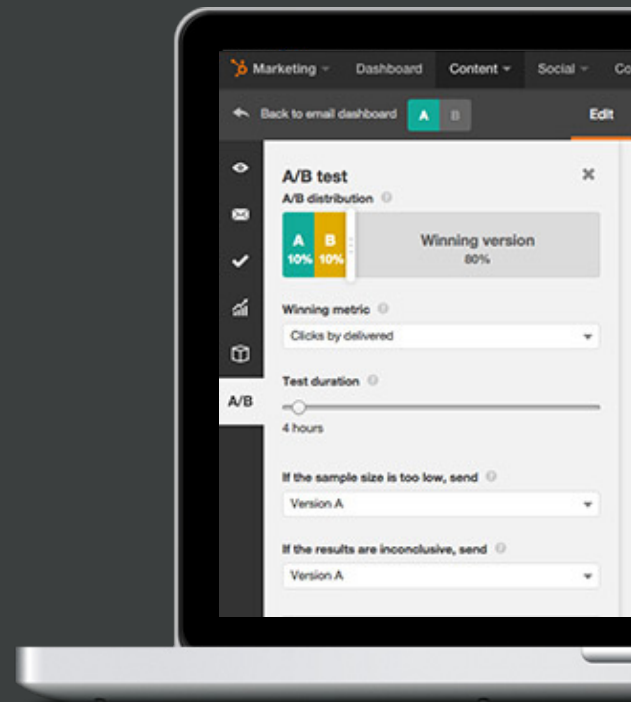
There's more to emailing than broadcasting out to a static email list. HubSpot gives you the tools to actually attract new subscribers.

### ✓ INTEGRATED ANALYTICS

No more exporting and merging data. With HubSpot, email metrics are fully integrated into the rest of your marketing analytics.

### ✓ TAILORED EMAIL

Segment your lists based on up to 1000 different criteria and personalize everything about your emails from sender to message.



[GET HUBSPOT EMAIL](#)