



5 hacks for getting more out of Gmail

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YOU MAY THINK you know all you need to know about Gmail to manage your account, but it's always safe to assume the powerful service has more up its sleeve. In fact, many of its coolest features may slip by you if you don't know where to look. Here are five tips for getting more out of what Gmail has to offer.

Easily unsubscribe to bulk emails

As good as Gmail's spam filter is, it can't catch everything, and bulk email messages will inevitably find their way into your inbox. Fortunately, there's an easy way to weed them out.

Just type "unsubscribe" into Gmail's search box and it will respond with a cascade of daily deals, newsletters, and other offers to which

Activity on this account

This feature provides information about the last activity on this mail account and any concurrent activity. [Learn more](#)

This account does not seem to be open in any other location. However, there may be sessions that have not been signed out.

[Sign out all other web sessions](#)

Recent activity:

Access Type [?] (Browser, mobile, POP3, etc.)	Location (IP address) [?]	Date/Time (Displayed in your time zone)
Browser (Firefox) Show details	* United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	12:53 pm (0 minutes ago)
Authorized Application (Show details)	United States (VA) (99.15.101.102)	12:51 pm (1 minute ago)
Browser (Firefox) Show details	* United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	10:41 am (2 hours ago)
Browser (Firefox) Show details	* United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	10:11 am (2.5 hours ago)
IMAP () Show details	United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	9:31 am (3 hours ago)
SMTP	United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	9:31 am (3 hours ago)
SMTP	United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	9:29 am (3 hours ago)
SMTP	United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	9:27 am (3 hours ago)
IMAP () Show details	United States (CA) (99.15.101.102)	Dec 8 (18 hours ago)
Authorized Application (Show details)	United States (VA) (99.15.101.102)	Dec 8 (18 hours ago)

Alert preference: Show an alert for unusual activity. [change](#)

you've long since forgotten subscribing. To stop receiving a message, open it and either click the unsubscribe button Gmail places next to the sender's address on promotional emails or look for an unsubscribe link at the bottom.

Use the activity log to see who has been logging in to your Gmail account.

Take advantage of email "aliases"

If you just can't help yourself and know you're going to continue to subscribe to offers and email notifications, use this hack to keep the influx organized.

Gmail doesn't use traditional aliases, but it does let you create alternate addresses by adding a plus sign followed by words or numbers after your email address. You can use this to your advantage to sort your subscriptions. For example, if you wanted to sign up for Groupon, enter your email address as John.Smith+groupon@gmail.com. Then set up a filter to apply a label or star to these messages, have them bypass your inbox, or otherwise redirect them.

Supercharge your stars

Gmail uses a yellow star to bookmark or prioritize messages. The problem is if you “star” a lot of email, you can quickly create another disorganized tier within your inbox.

But it's a little-known fact that Gmail actually offers a range of colored stars (go.pcworld.com/gmailstars) and even other icons you can use to impose order on your important emails. For example, you can use different colored stars for different priority levels or use a red exclamation point for messages that need an urgent reply.

Just go to Settings > General and scroll down to Stars. Drag the stars or symbols you want to add from the Not In Use category to In Use. To apply one of the new icons to a message, click the star next to it repeatedly until you see the symbol you want to use.

Keep tabs on your account activity

They may not get the headlines like other types of security breaches, but email hacks do happen (go.pcworld.com/emailhacks). You can monitor your own Gmail activity if you know where to look.

Scroll all the way to the bottom of your inbox and look for the Details link in the right corner. Click it to see information on the last 10 times your Gmail account was accessed. This log shows you the access type—browser, mobile, POP3, etc.—the location and IP address, and the time of activity. From here, you can also log out of Gmail from another computer by hitting the Sign Out All Other Web Sessions button.

Drag the stars between the lists. The stars will rotate in the order shown below when you click successively. To learn the name of a star for search, hover your mouse over the image.

Presets: 1 star 4 stars all stars

In use: ★

Not in use: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ! ! ! ! ! ?

Use Gmail's full palette of stars and symbols to prioritize your messages.

Manage an inactive account

We can't imagine you'd ever want to stop using Gmail, but nonetheless you should decide how you'd want your data handled if that day should come. You can do this with Google's Inactive Account Manager (go.pcworld.com/googleinactive).


This fail-safe helps Google determine when your account should be treated as inactive, what to do with your data, and whom to notify. You just need to customize four settings:

Timeout period—you designate a length of time starting from your last login after which your account can be considered inactive.

Alert me—you provide a mobile number and additional email addresses by which Google can alert you. It will do so one month before your timeout period ends.

Notify contacts and share data—you can add up to 10 people to be notified when your account is inactive and elect whether or not to share data with them.

Optionally delete account—toggle this switch to Yes if you want Google to delete your account and all data associated with it once all the previous steps have been completed.

These measures go into play if you don't access your account for a length of time for any reason, so it's worth taking the time to configure them. 

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