

CONQUER YOUR GMAIL INBOX

Label, Filter, Snooze, Archive, Delete

How's your Inbox clutter? Have you exceeded 10,000 messages yet? There are many strategies for Inbox management, one being just let it grow, and depend on the search tool to locate what you need. Another is just the opposite: end each day with an empty Inbox.

I prefer a more moderate strategy: limit the Inbox to about 50 messages. I find that unchecked growth leads to lost messages, and that zero growth leads to unnecessary work, since many messages can be processed and safely deleted within a week or two.

Google provides us users with some powerful tools for email management. In this paper, I will discuss the five that are most useful to me. My goal is a system in which any message can be quickly and easily found, and no message is lost.

Tool #1- LABELS. Traditional email services, such as Yahoo, Hotmail and others, provide a "folder" system to aid organization. The user can create new folders, sub-folders, sub-sub-folders, etc. and then move mail into the appropriate folder. This folder system is also provided by most operating systems to help users organize files. But GMAIL HAS NO FOLDERS! And this fact takes some getting used to, especially since much of the documentation in existence today refers to labels as "folders".

But that folder-like tool used by Gmail creates LABELS, not folders. A label has all the capabilities of a folder, plus some additional capabilities. The most important addition is the ability to store a message under more than one label, whereas in the folder system, the user must choose one and only one folder.

Here's an example: Say in the folder system, I have created a folder called "lawyer" and another called "bills". When I get a bill from my lawyer, my dilemma is- Do I put it in the lawyer folder, or do I put it in the bills folder? Recall that I want to be able to find this email later, and having some bills in one folder and some in the other is not a good solution. Using the Gmail system, I can put the bill in both places: a copy under the "lawyer" label and a copy under the "bills" label. Parenthetically I will add- don't be surprised to see operating systems switch to the label system sooner or later, because it is more powerful.

Another example- What if I create a label for “newsletters” and another for “medical info”? Where do I put that newsletter from the Cleveland Clinic? With Gmail’s labeling system, I can save it in both places.

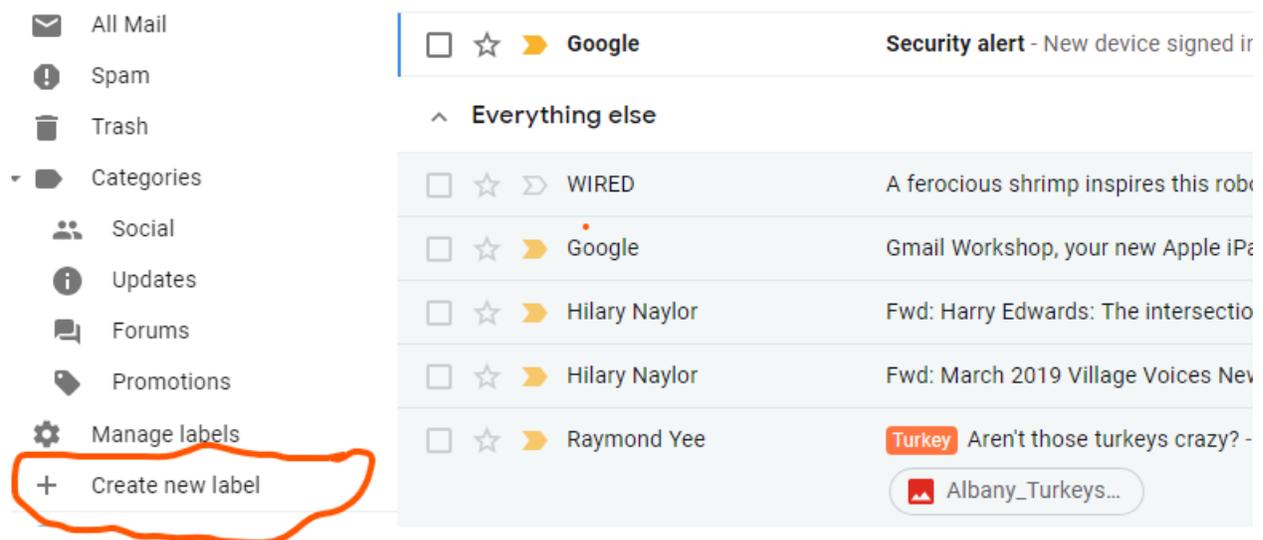
How is this done? There are a variety of ways, depending on what device you are using, and which method you choose.

The screen that you see when you are using Gmail will vary depending on the device you are using. Today’s devices have many different screen sizes, manufacturers, operating systems, etc. When you log into your Google account, Google’s software will analyze your device, and send you a suitable screen, contingent upon which device you are using. For example, screen space is quite limited on a phone, so you will have many more sub-menus and sub-sub-menus compared to a desktop.

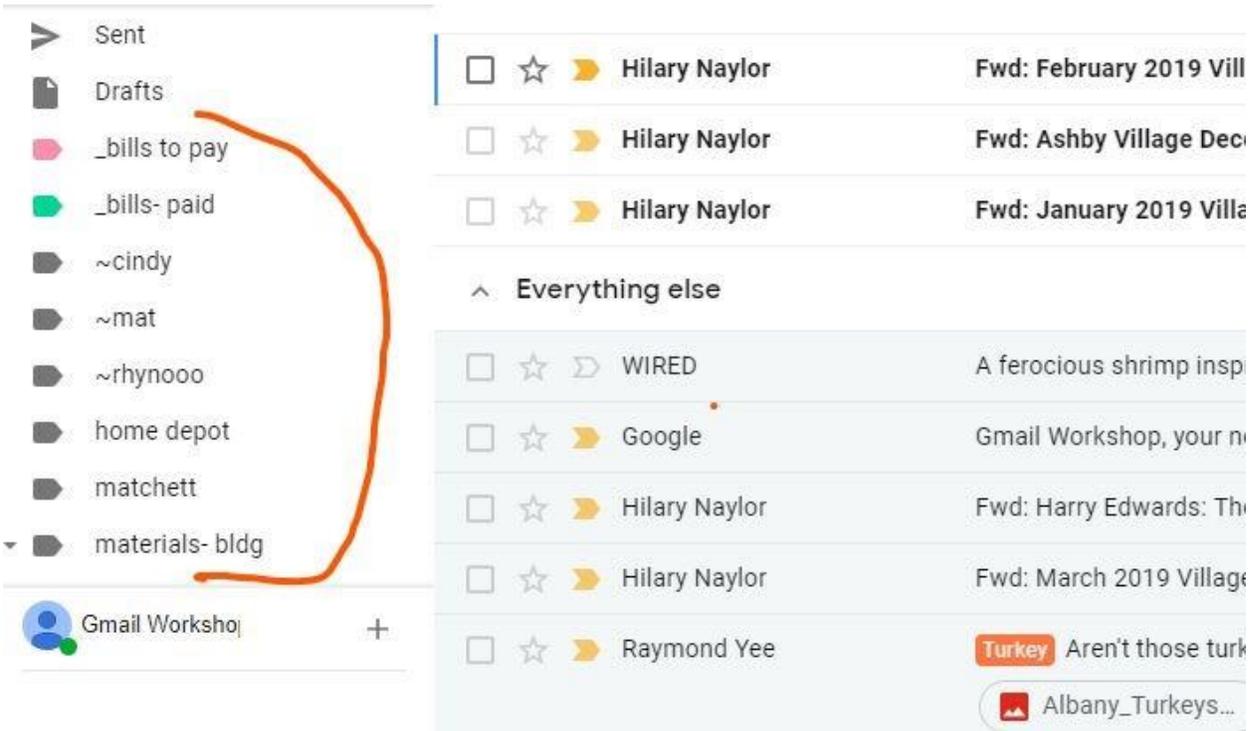
The new labels you create will appear in alphabetical order near the middle of the label list. You can trick Gmail into putting some labels at the top of your list where they will be easier to find. This is done by placing a symbol in front of the name of the label. In the fake Gmail account we created, I put “bills to pay” at the top of the list, followed by the fake grandkids, with all else following. So the label I used for “bills to pay” is preceded by an underscore (_) and the label for Granddaughter Cindy is preceded by a carat (^).

Here is how a computer will alphabetize these 6 symbols: _ ^ 6 a b c. You can often use this convention to your advantage when manipulating lists.

CREATING A NEW LABEL WHEN USING A WINDOWS 10 DESKTOP-- Go to the “labels” list to the left of the Inbox. Scroll ALL the way to the bottom and select “create new label”. Fill in the dialog box that says: “Please enter a new label name.” Please see the screenshot displayed below—



Here is the new label list with Bills to Pay, Cindy, and a few other labels added. Notice that placing the underscore symbol in front of “bills to pay” tricks Gmail into putting it at the top of the new labels. I also color coded some of the labels: red for bills to pay, green for bills- paid, etc.---



CREATING A NEW LABEL WHEN USING A SAMSUNG ANDROID TABLET-- As of this writing (March 2019) Android devices do not support creating new labels or filters, although those created from another machine are supported. However, they do support the “snooze” tool. Support for the other two tools is rumored to be on its way.

Tool #2- FILTERS. A filter is a tool often used to keep nasty stuff out of your Inbox. It is similar to a water filter which is often used to keep nasty stuff out of your drinking water. This tool allows the user to intercept messages headed for the inbox and redirect them to another label, including the “trash” label. In other words, messages can be saved under a label of your choosing, without ever appearing in your Inbox.

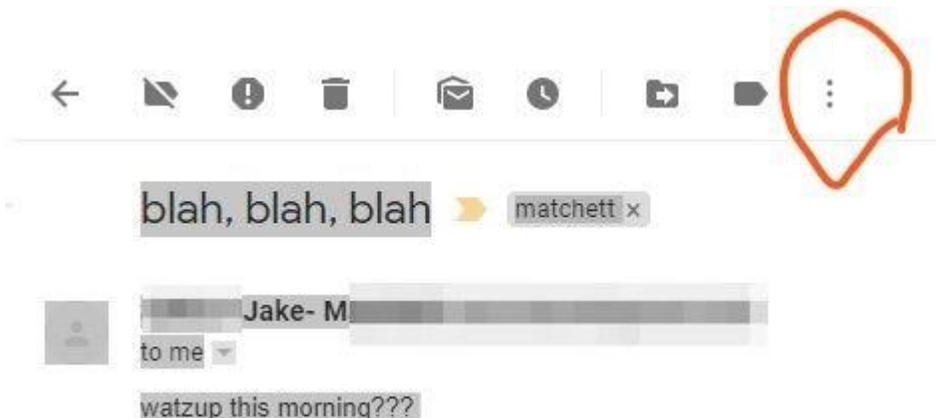
For example, I love to read the ads from Home Depot to see what is on sale, but not until Friday afternoon. When one per day shows up in my Inbox, it's just an annoying distraction. So I set a filter that sends them to the "Home Depot" label without them ever showing up in my Inbox. If I don't have a project planned for a few months, I change the label so that they go directly to the "trash" label. Another example- I belong to a neighborhood newsgroup, which is useful for keeping up with the lives of my nearby neighbors. However, the group is a little too chatty for me- too much news about whose cat gave birth, how many kittens, what color and gender, and when they will be up for adoption. Then a dozen people are compelled to leave their messages of congratulations, with questions about the health of the mother, etc. I welcome neighborhood news, but I don't want to look at it until the end of my workday, or maybe not at all some weeks. So I use a filter to insure that these messages skip my inbox, and go under the appropriate label, which I have named "Chatty Neighbors".

Another use for the filtering tool- adding a second label to a message I want to leave in the Inbox for a few days. For example, messages from my boss. These are important messages that I want to see immediately, rather than having them linger under another label for hours, until I happen to notice them. On the other hand, messages from the boss are important messages that I like to keep together for future reference. So I set a filter that saves those messages in two locations: "Inbox" and "Boss".

How is this done? Again, there are a variety of ways, depending on what device you are using, and which path you choose.

CREATING A NEW FILTER WHEN USING A WINDOWS 10 DESKTOP--

Open one of the messages you would like to filter. At the top of the screen, you will see some tool icons, including a trash can and a label. Next to the label, you will see 3 vertical dots, which usually indicates there are more choices. Choose the 3 dots icon. You will see a drop down menu of additional choices. Select- "Filter messages like this."



A dialog box like the one below will appear. Gmail is asking you which messages you want filtered. Gmail has already filled in the address of the message you just opened, which is likely to be the one you want filtered.

From

To

Subject

Has the words

Doesn't have

Size

Has attachment Don't include chats

After you select “Create filter”, a second dialog box will appear. Fill it in like the example below. This will cause certain messages to be stored under the selected label, after skipping the Inbox. (You must have created a suitable label before filling in this second dialog box.)

← When a message arrives that matches this search:

- Skip the Inbox (Archive it)
- Mark as read
- Star it
- Apply the label: matchett
- Forward it [add forwarding address](#)
- Delete it
- Never send it to Spam
- Always mark it as important
- Never mark it as important
- Categorize as: Choose category...
- Also apply filter to 5 matching conversations.

[Learn more](#)

Create filter

Don't forget to select “Create filter”. Now, messages from one.match@gmail.com will go straight to the “matchett” label, without ever going in the Inbox.

CREATING A NEW FILTER WHEN USING A SAMSUNG ANDROID TABLET-- As of this writing (March 2019) Android devices do not support creating new labels or filters, although those created from another machine are supported. However, they do support the “snooze” tool. Support for the other two tools is rumored to be on its way.

Tool #3- **SNOOZE**. This tool removes a message from your Inbox for a period of time specified by you, the user. At the end of the period, it pops back into your Inbox, complete with a notation that says for how long it has been snoozed. For example, if I receive a message with instructions to do something important, but I see that it can wait 10 days, I might snooze it for a week. If it is something that has to be done in 90 days, I might snooze it for two months.

How is this done?

SNOOZING WHEN USING A WINDOWS 10 DESKTOP-- HOVER over the message with your mouse. The date (on the far right of the screen) will change to a clock icon. Select the clock and a drop down menu will appear with some choices, such as “tomorrow” and “this weekend”. The most useful is the last one, which is “Pick a date and time.”

SNOOZING WHEN USING A SAMSUNG ANDROID TABLET-- With a Samsung Android tablet: Get the message on the screen, then select the three vertical dots at the extreme right of the screen. Select the dots and a drop down menu will appear. Select “Snooze”, which is the first choice. A drop down menu will appear with some choices, such as “tomorrow” and “this weekend”. The most useful is the last one, which is “Pick a date and time.”

Tool #4- **ARCHIVE**. This tool removes the message from the Inbox label, but leaves it in All Mail, in case you want to access it at a later time.

How is this done?

Using a Windows 10 desktop: Go to your Inbox. Look at the message list and find the message you would like to archive. HOVER over it with your mouse. Near the right side of the screen, you will see the “archive” button- it’s a box with a down arrow in it. Select it and the message listing will disappear. You can go to the All Mail label to check that the message is still there.

Using a Samsung Android tablet: Go to your Inbox and get the message you wish to archive up on the screen. Select the “archive” button, which is a rectangular box with a down arrow in it. It is located near the top right corner of the message. The message will disappear. You can go to the All Mail label and make sure that the message is still there.

Tool #5- **DELETE** . This tool moves a message to the “Delete” label, where it, in theory at least, will stay for 30 days. At the end of 30 days, it is automatically and permanently deleted. That’s forever, so be careful.

How is this done?

USING A WINDOWS 10 DESKTOP-- Go to the Inbox listing of files and HOVER over the message you wish to delete. Near the right side of the screen a trash can will appear. Select it and the listing will disappear.

You can also select a block of messages- check the first message in the block. Then select the last message in the block while holding down the “shift” key.

Or you can select a group of non-contiguous messages by holding down the “control” key as you select them.

USING A SAMSUNG ANDROID TABLET-- Get the message you wish to delete up on the screen. Select the trash can icon near the upper right corner of the message.

3/18/2019-- Jake M. with help from the Ashby Village Tech Team