

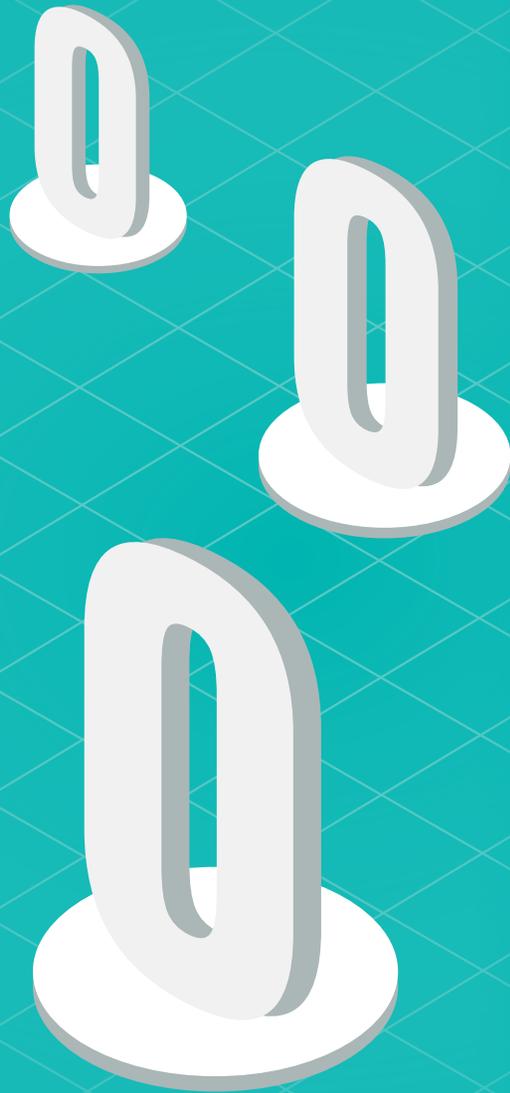
EBOOK

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# 20 Gmail Hacks to Maximize Productivity





## INTRODUCTION

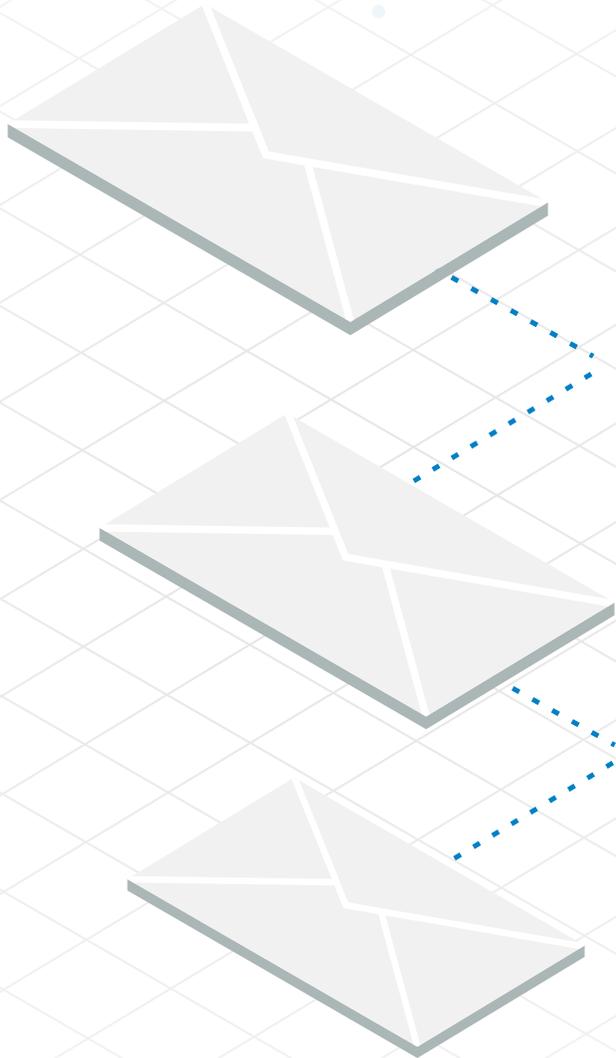
Gmail is a powerful productivity tool, so long as you take control of your inbox, rather than letting it control you. Below we outline 20 more hidden features, settings and tools to help you fine-tune your Gmail experience and maximize your productivity. “Inbox Zero” has never been closer to reality.

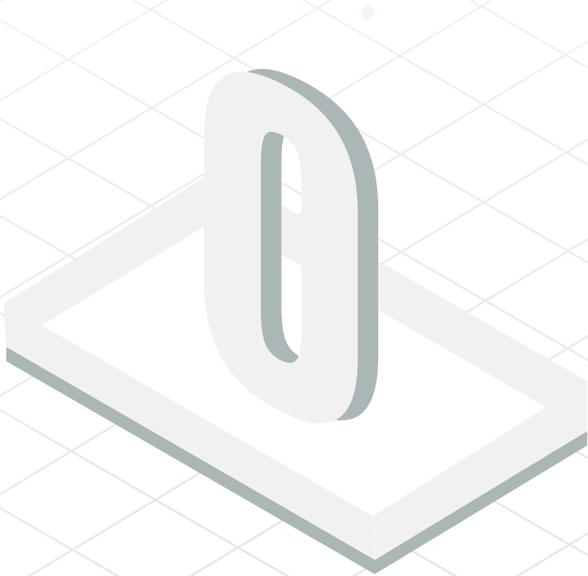
## BUILD ONE INBOX TO RULE THEM ALL

Many of us maintain multiple email accounts for multiple purposes, which can require us to juggle the eccentricities of [signing into multiple Gmail accounts](#) or, if some of our extra addresses belong to Yahoo or any other non-Google mail-provider, we must log in and log out of multiple sites to check our mail. (That, or use a desktop mail client like Outlook or Thunderbird, which has its own limitations.) There is [a more elegant, web-based option](#), however, that allows you to manage all the mail from a single inbox with a single login. Gmail will display the account to which the email was originally addressed just below the "From" address at the top of the message, so you always know how any given message found its way to you.

## MANAGE MULTIPLE MAIL IDENTITIES

If you're forwarding another email account to your Gmail inbox, you can [change the "From" address on any message](#) to appear as if you're sending mail from those forwarded accounts. Even better, you can set your inbox to [automatically send replies as the account that originally received](#) a message, so you can keep your "real" email address a secret (or, at least, separate from your alternate email accounts). You can even [maintain separate Gmail signatures](#) for each address.





## STAY AT INBOX ZERO

When you compose a message in Gmail, the draft sits in your inbox until you click Send. After that, the message is archived until the recipient replies. When you reply to a message in Gmail, however, the conversation sits in your inbox until you manually archive it. Why wait? If you've responded, shouldn't the message just clear out until you hear back? By [enabling the Send & Archive on Reply](#), you get a new button you can use to archive a conversation as soon as you respond to it. That way, your inbox stays free of conversations you've already dealt with.

## POWER THROUGH YOUR INBOX

Once you've archived or deleted an open message in Gmail, you're routed back to the Inbox to take another action. Wouldn't it be nice if, instead, archiving or deleting a message also opened the next message in your inbox, so you can respond to it as well? With the [Auto-Advance Gmail Labs tool](#), you can. Combine this tool with the Send & Archive on Reply button and you can plow through your Gmail Inbox in record time. Auto-Advance even works when you [Mute a Gmail conversation](#).

## PRE-ORGANIZE YOUR EMAILS

When Google pushed out the small, simplified Gmail compose window in 2013, it tucked away from view a very powerful organizational tool: [labels](#). Hidden in the little arrow next to the Trash icon in the bottom right of the compose window is the option to [Label or Star your message before you send it](#). Any replies you receive will automatically fall under the label applied to the original message, and the conversation will already be starred. It's much faster and easier than manually labeling messages after you receive a reply.



## MAKE YOUR MAIL ARCHIVE EXTRA-SEARCHABLE

We've talked about the awesome [Gmail search operators](#) that let you hone in on exactly the archived messages you're looking for. Let's take it to the net level. To make certain messages even easier to find, seed your emails and even Google chats with hashtags. Just as you would on Twitter, **simply add the # sign to the beginning of any word and use it like a recurring tag**. For example, you could tag any of your travel-planning emails or chats with the #biztravel hashtag. Then, when you search for #biztravel in Gmail, you'll find every email that contains the hashtag. Most of us don't use hashtags in regular correspondence, so these tags will serve as "search magnets" for specific messages or chat strings. (Gmail's internal search returns both.)

## INSTANTLY RE-RUN YOUR FAVORITE GMAIL SEARCHES

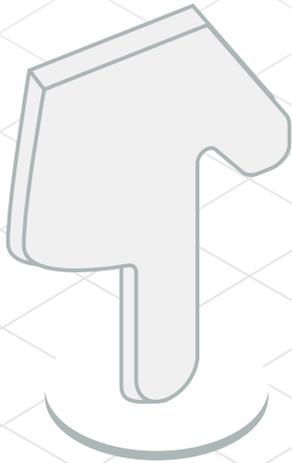
Now that you're in the habit of using hashtags and labels, you'll want to speed up the process of searching for messages tagged with these (or any other) markers. If you've got a complex search string or three that you use regularly, now you can save yourself some typing (and typos) by [turning that query into a Gmail Quick Link](#). Just enable the Quick Link option in Labs, and you can add any search to the list of links that appear in the left column of your Gmail inbox (below labels, above chat). Now you can re-run your favorite, super-complex and hyper-specific searches with a single click.

## DEFINE YOUR WORLDVIEW WITH INBOX STYLES

Adding Quick Links isn't the only way you can customize the appearance and function of your Gmail inbox. Gmail has a number of [inbox styles and settings](#) that let you control the layout and organization of your primary Gmail interface. The default option divides your Gmail inbox into three tabs: Primary, Social and Promotions, with the option to add Updates and Forums tabs. The Important First option creates an upper section for [items Google marks as important](#), and a lower section for items Google marks as unimportant. The Unread First and Starred First sections are self-explanatory, though the latter is a good match for folks who label and star on send. The [Priority Inbox](#) is the most complex, as it can combine or segregate a combination of important, unread and starred messages into one or more separate inbox sections, with highly granular control over what types of messages qualify for each area. You can also override filters that normally sort messages out of the inbox entirely. The options are staggering; use them to build the perfect organizational model for your mail consumption.

## GET COMFY (OR COZY) BY TWEAKING YOUR INBOX DENSITY

Once you've got your Gmail inbox organized into your preferred sections, you can [adjust the density](#)—the vertical line spacing—of the message list. The default position is called Comfortable, while Cozy and Compact progressively decrease the amount vertical space each line in the list occupies. Increase the density, and your email list takes up a much smaller amount of screen real estate—freeing your view up for other windows and tasks.



## MASTER MORE MESSAGES

Under the General tab of your [Gmail settings](#), you can **set the number of messages (or Contacts) shown per page**, up to a maximum of 100 messages. Combined with a Compact density, you can work through a much greater number of messages at a time, even on smaller screens.

## GET X-RAY EMAIL VISION

Microsoft Outlook veterans are familiar with the Preview Pane, wherein you can view the first few lines of an email message without opening it. [Gmail has its own Preview Pane option](#), which you can display below or to the right of your inbox. Previewing a message for a few seconds marks it as read, allowing you to quickly triage which emails are worthy of deeper dives, and which can be dealt with after a casual glance.

## UNSHACKLE YOURSELF FROM MS OUTLOOK

Speaking of Outlook (or Mac Mail or Thunderbird), one of the many tasks that desktop mail clients perform is to “intercept” any hyperlinks that allow you to send emails and pop open the desktop app to compose the message. The [Send from Gmail Chrome browser extension](#) can do the same thing for Gmail, opening a web page for the Gmail compose window whenever you click a linked email address. Even better, the extension's icon lives in the upper right of your browser window and any time you click it, the Gmail compose window will open with the web address of the page you're on already formatted and ready for sharing by email. If you need to send links by mail on a regular basis (hi, mom), there's no faster way to get it done.

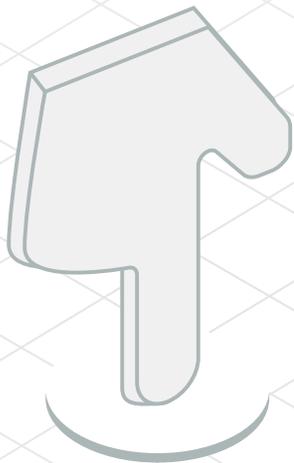
## QUICKLY CALM YOUR INBOX

You can mass-archive emails, but what if you simply want to calm the harsh glare of unread statuses without removing messages from your inbox? The **Mark as Read button**, available under the [Gmail Labs](#) tab in your settings, adds that option to the list of control buttons atop your Gmail interface. Simply mass-select messages, click the button, and the chosen conversations are listed as read but still stick around. It's like the Preview Pane, but faster.

## NAVIGATE YOUR MAIL WITH EASE

In the left column of your Gmail inbox is a list of labels, including your Sent Mail and Drafts, with an option to view your complete list. You can [customize your Gmail label list](#), control whether the labels are shown, hidden, or (in the case of Spam and Drafts) only shown if they contain unread messages. If you have a custom label you want handy access to, here's how you get it visible all the time. Never need to see the Drafts, Trash or All Mail folders? Simply hide them. A cleaner Gmail interface is just a click away.





## CAN THE SPAM

Google has added a new option to the list of possible mail responses like Reply, Reply All and Forward: [Block](#). With the Block option, the email address that sent a particular message will be hereafter routed directly to your Spam folder and, like all spam, will be deleted after 30 days. This is different than marking a message as spam, as Gmail tries to analyze what it is about a Spam-marked email that qualifies the message as unwanted and applies that to future incoming emails (a process which may or may not block future messages from the same sender). Block is much more specific: blocked email addresses will never escape your spam filter again. Well, unless you unblock the address in your Gmail settings. Spammers and harassers have met their match.

## MAKE PHONE CALLS FROM GMAIL (EVEN FROM YOUR PC)

Even if you don't have a [Google Voice](#) account, Gmail will still allow you to make a voice over IP (VOIP) phone call right from your inbox. Any properly formatted phone number that appears in the body of Gmail message is clickable, and clicking will prompt Google Chat (or [Google Hangouts](#), if you've installed the plug-in) [to make an outbound phone call via Gmail](#) right from your computer or mobile device. You can also manually dial a phone number from within Gmail via Google Chat (or Hangouts).

## ESCAPE THE RUINED LABS

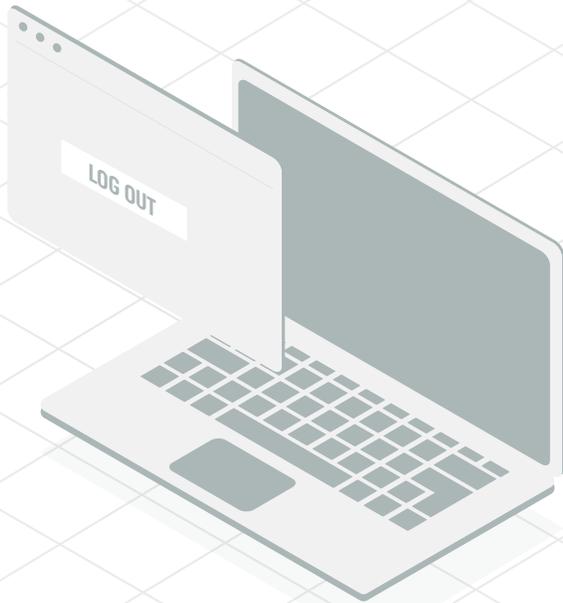
Many of the tools we mention in this guide are made possible through Gmail Labs, a service which test-drives options and ideas for new Gmail features— some of which occasionally break. Broken labs can very occasionally cause major disruptions in your use of Gmail, which is why Google offers an ["escape hatch" link that blocks all labs from Gmail](#), so you can use an "un-Labbed" version of your inbox anytime.

## SURVIVE SLOW INTERNET CONNECTIONS

Broken Gmail Labs aren't the only thing that can slow down or even halt your Gmail usage: a slow or unreliable internet connection (like the kind you get in hotels, airports and conference centers) can make Gmail access frustratingly sluggish. Fortunately, Google offers a pared-down Gmail with nearly all of the background scripting and interactive bells and whistles removed specifically for use in low-bandwidth emergencies: [HTML-only Gmail](#). This version of Gmail is lean, mean and usable even on old dial-up AOL connections. You won't have all the functionality you're used to, but the basics of reading, replying and composing are all there and ready for work. Take that, janky coffee-shop Wi-Fi hotspot.

## KICK OUT GMAIL SQUATTERS AND SPIES

Nobody's perfect, and all of us have occasionally signed into Gmail on someone else's device or PC and forgotten to sign back out later. Those Gmail sessions are just hanging out there, waiting for someone to discover them and abuse access to your precious inbox data. Even worse, someone might have stolen your password and is logging into your Gmail account without your knowledge or permission. You can stay ahead of all of these nightmare scenarios by checking details of your [Last Account Activity link](#) at the bottom of your Gmail inbox. The screen will list all the IP addresses where someone has accessed your account, and it includes a Sign Out All Other Web Sessions link, which will kill any non-mobile-app's immediate access to your Gmail account. Combine that with a [quick Gmail password change](#), and anyone who had unwanted access to your Gmail account will immediately lose it and have no way back in.



## Datto SaaS Protection

- **Unmatched cloud expertise** from the global leaders in SaaS protection
- **The cost-effective** choice for the Enterprise, offering a reliable, fast, automated, and scalable solution
- **Truly secure**, independent backup that is SOC 2 Type II & HIPAA compliant
- **Quickly recover data** from ransomware, accidental deletion, or human error with Datto SaaS Protection's infinite retention and unlimited storage

Ask your Managed Services Provider for more information on Datto SaaS Protection.

## EMAIL PROFILE PICTURE

After all the Gmail customization and personalization you've learned in this guide, there's one last finishing touch that far too many Gmail users overlook: [Adding a Gmail profile picture](#). With the very low adoption of Google Plus, relatively few users have ever configured a profile picture for their Google Account, which means the people who receive your emails, chats and phone calls via Gmail never get a personal image of who you are. Gmail can resize, reformat and crop any image you upload—and any self-portrait, selfie or self-referencing image, logo or meme will do. You've gone to all the trouble of remaking your Gmail inbox in your own image; shouldn't your preferred image be a part of your Gmail inbox?

## CONCLUSION

The simplicity of the Gmail interface often leads users to assume that they can't tweak or fine-tune their Gmail experience for added comfort or efficiency. Nothing could be further from the truth. With a few easy adjustments and additions, optimize your Gmail for your personal workflow and make mail-management simpler, faster and more productive. Just remember, even the most well-designed Gmail inbox deserves [a good backup plan](#).

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