

# email clean-up TIPS

**1 Process promptly, or schedule clean-up time.**  
Ideally, as soon as you receive an email, take action: respond if appropriate, then delete or move the email out of your inbox and into another folder. This will keep your inbox clean all the time, but it's not always realistic, so you can also schedule time to clean up your email: an hour a week, or an afternoon once a month.

**2 Prioritize your emails.**  
Not all emails are of equal value. Give some thought to what emails you receive, from whom, and how you deal with them. For example, emails with attachments from people you don't know should always be suspect and top contenders for instant deletion.

**3 Delete. Delete. Delete.**  
Trash as many emails as you can to keep from drowning in them. See Step 5 for tips on automatically deleting unwanted emails. Or, take a tip from household organization: create a new folder "Delete on xx.xx.2008." Save the email(s) today, but if you haven't gone back to them by that date, delete.

**4 Create a filing system.**  
You may need to retain some emails, at least temporarily. To keep your inbox clean, create folders and sub-folders. Step 2 should help you figure out what folders to create: clients, senders, projects, action required (follow-up, pending, research, etc).

**5 Use your email program's special features.**  
In many programs, including Outlook 2003, you can color-code emails according to recipient or sender. You can also automate email management with "rules" and "filters." For example, you can tell the program to automatically move emails regarding a project to that project's folder, or sends certain emails to the trash.

**6 Use the Sort feature.**  
You don't have to list emails in the order received. Clicking on the "From," "Subject," or "Size" columns will sort emails according to those attributes. That makes it easy to move or delete a group of emails all at once. The "Size" column will also help you find the biggest memory hogs, if your email account is nearly full.

**7 Manage the email you receive before it's sent.**  
Unsubscribe from emails and newsletters you don't read regularly. Use email programs or security suites with spam filters. Don't be afraid to ask people to stop emailing you certain items, or emailing you at a certain address. For instance, is it really beneficial to you to receive private emails at your work address?

**8 Export or save emails.**  
For the really important emails, you might want to save them on your hard disk. How to do this depends on the email software you use. In Outlook, it's as simple as File > Save As. Other programs might require a more roundabout way, such as printing an email to a file.

**9 Don't forget the Sent folder.**  
An awful lot of the clutter, as well as account memory hogs, comes from forgetting to clean up the Sent Folder. Get rid of all the old emails you can, and use the Sort function to find the emails taking up the most memory.

**10 Empty the trash folder.**  
Most email programs have a fail-safe—clicking the "delete" button doesn't really delete the email, but instead moves it to the Trash Folder. To get rid of it once and for all, you have to empty the Trash Folder.

