

## Email Organization



**Notes:**

Welcome to the training module titled, Email Organization. This training is offered by the State of Michigan, Records Management Services.

## Prerequisites

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- General knowledge of records management responsibilities and retention schedules
  - [Basic Records Management class](#)
  - [Email Management training](#)
- General knowledge of email software and desktop computing
  - [Office 365 Training Center](#)



### Notes:

Records Management Services offers training that defines: employee recordkeeping responsibilities, what a record is, how long to keep records, and how Retention and Disposal Schedules help agencies manage their records.

This **Email Organization** training will *not* discuss those topics in depth. Please take the [Basic Records Management](#) class to learn more; it is a prerequisite for this class. In addition, employees should take the [Email Management](#) training prior to taking this training.

Also, this class assumes that users have general knowledge of email software and desktop computing. If you need assistance with these topics, training is available online from the Microsoft Office 365 Training Center (<http://support.office.com/en-us>).

## Why should you clean up your email?

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- Records that are kept too long:
  - Waste space and money
  - Make it harder to find the stuff you need
- Email should be stored with other records that document the activity or project
- Email accounts should be cleaned at least annually



### Notes:

#### Why should you clean up your email?

Records that are kept too long waste space and money, and make it harder to find the stuff you need.

Email should be stored with other records that document the activity or project. Email accounts should be cleaned at least annually.

## Do you have too much email?

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- This training contains tips for:
  - Cleaning up your email account
  - Maintaining a clean account
- The goal is to help you keep what is relevant to you, and get rid of the rest
- Hopefully, *some* of these tips will be useful to you



### Notes:

#### It's clean-up time!

Do you have too much stuff in your email account? Do you want to clean up your email account? Is your boss telling you that you have to clean up your email account?

This training contains tips for cleaning up your email account and maintaining a clean account into the future. The goal is to help you keep what is relevant to you, and get rid of the rest. Hopefully, *some* of these tips will be useful to you.

## Tip: Adopt a clean-up strategy

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- Day-forward first
  - Pick a start date
  - Move all older email out of the way
  - Adopt new recordkeeping habits
- Don't worry about the old stuff
  - Wait 6-12 months to clean the old email
  - New habits will make clean up easier



### Notes:

#### Tip: Adopt a clean-up strategy

If you are ready to clean up your email, and you are intimidated about where and how to start, you can try this strategy...

Focus on the day-forward first messages first. Pick a start date for managing new email. Move all older email to a folder titled with a date range (example: pre-2020).

Consistently manage new messages as they are sent and received, and adopt new recordkeeping habits.

Don't worry about the old stuff at first. Wait 6-12 months to clean up the old email. New habits will make clean up easier when you are ready.

## Tip: Know the Maximum

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- What is the maximum retention period of the records you are responsible for keeping? 
- If you don't have time to review individual email messages, you can retain all the email for the maximum timeframe
- Use rules or search techniques to find records older than the max, and delete annually
- The next slide illustrates how this works for some employees



### Notes:

#### Tip: Know the Maximum

What is the maximum retention period of the records you are responsible for keeping? Refer to the agency specific schedule for your office, as well as the general schedules, to determine the retention periods for the records that you maintain. The schedules are available online at <https://inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement>.

If you don't have time to review each individual email message in your account, you can retain all the email in your account for the maximum timeframe. Once you know the max, you can use rules or search techniques to find records older than the max, and delete them annually.

The next slide illustrates how this works for some employees. Hopefully, these examples will help you determine your max.

## How do others manage their email?

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*Hover over the buttons to see examples of how some employees manage their email. They may help you figure out what the maximum retention period is for the email you have.*



### Notes:

The following are case studies that illustrate how some employees manage their email. They may help you figure out what the maximum retention period is for the email you have. Remember, retention schedules are available online, so you can look up the retention periods for records maintained by your office.

### Administrative Assistant

I am an Administrative Assistant for a 17 level State Administrative Manager. I am responsible for making large purchases for the office, time keeping, schedule meetings, reviewing letters, memos, and other communications for distribution to our internal partners and the public. I have access to a document management system and all "official" communications, and the subject and project-based records are stored there. Timekeeping and procurement records are managed in SIGMA. Any communications with staff regarding purchases or timekeeping can be disposed of according the General Schedule for Administrative Records, which says that Transitory Records – are retained until activity is completed. The rest of my email communications fall under the same general schedule which says that General Correspondence needs to be retained until the date sent or received plus 2 years. Our office does have an agency specific retention schedule; however, I am not directly involved in any of the business processes. I can be comfortable setting my auto delete feature in Outlook to creation plus 2 years and be in compliance with the retention policies.

### **Financial Analyst - DTMB Finance**

I am a Financial Analyst in the finance unit of DTMB. I am responsible for assisting with the analysis and development of budget projections for the DTMB divisions I am assigned to. I assist them in monitoring expenses and making budget adjustments as necessary. I provide assistance with the interpretation and management of budgets including current and long-term economic and business trends. I assist them in assessing how trends may have a financial impact on programs and service rates. Most of the records I create or receive are related to my agency specific schedule item numbers 309015 for Financial Workpapers and 309016 for Financial Reports. Both retention periods are until the end of fiscal year plus 7 years, and are organized and stored on the offices network share drive. Any email I receive related to my work is incorporated into the workpapers. The rest of my email communications fall under the General Schedule for Administrative Records, which says that General Correspondence needs to be retained until the date sent or received plus 2 years. If I choose to document my activities in the network shared drive, I can set my auto delete in Outlook 2 years. If I choose to use my email account to supplement my workpapers on the network shared drive, I should set my auto delete in Outlook to 8 years (to cover the full retention period). Either choice will be compliant with our retention policy.

### **IT Analyst - DTMB, Design and Delivery**

I am a Technology Analyst for DTMB – Design and Delivery. I am responsible for monitoring and maintaining the email messaging system. I receive requests for service to query the application for data and documents that are needed for litigation and Freedom of Information Requests, and I work with customers to define the scope of their query. The customer is responsible for keeping our communications, and the objects that are retrieved from the query. The Remedy application tracks the ticket activity. I am also responsible for creating, modifying and deleting email accounts as directed by the agency Authorized Requestor. This process is also documented through Remedy. The rest of my email communications fall under the General Schedules Non-records and Administrative Records. If requests are properly documented in Remedy, I can set my auto delete functions in Outlook to be 2 years. If my email is needed as a supplement for a Remedy ticket, then I should auto delete email after 7 years, to comply with the Design and Delivery retention item #38681 for Remedy Support System Data.

### **Human Resources Analyst**

I am a Human Resources Analyst with DHHS. I review recommendations for employee promotions, transfers, suspensions and separations. I conduct interviews with potential new employees, and I review and approve selection criteria for filling vacancies. I also prepare statistical reports regarding hiring practices and other selection data. Hiring processes are documented in NeoGov, and employee files and labor relations files are managed in our Electronic Document Management System (EDM). Any employee specific email not otherwise documented in a formal process is filed directly in the EDM. All other communications are administrative or transitory in nature. I am confident that if I file records into our EDM, and I set my auto delete in Outlook for 2 years, and I will be in compliance with our retention policies.

**Maintenance Worker - MDOT**

I am a Maintenance Worker for MDOT assigned to perform general maintenance and repair work on the Blue Water Bridge. I don't have an assigned computer workstation. A few times a week I will access a shared workstation to check my email, update timekeeping, and submit reimbursement requests. The email I send and receive is either informational and falls under the General Schedule for Non-records, or it is transitory and falls under the General Schedule for Administrative Records. I delete most of it after I read it, but if I set my auto delete feature in Outlook to 2 years, I would be compliant with my retention policy for any communications I may receive.

**Executive Director**

I'm a Director of a large state agency. I am responsible for the overall direction of the department. I am member of the Governors Cabinet and multiple internal cross-departmental committees. I am also a voting member of a public committee subject to the Open Meetings Act. Our office does not have an agency specific retention schedule and exclusively uses the State of Michigan's general schedules. I may choose to delete received email that is considered to be "non-record" material according to the General Schedule when it is no longer needed for my reference purposes. Communications related to the subjects, projects or activities concerning my department are subject to the General Schedule for Administrative records, which covers the Administrative Subject Files of Executive Offices. Given the importance of my position in the organization, these communications are required to be transferred to the Archives of Michigan once they are no longer considered to be of ongoing interest. If I have a centralized filing system for the office to retain subject file materials including email, I can treat these communications as convenience copies. If I have no central repository for the executive office, then I must retain and manage them in my email and my email will be transferred to the Archives of Michigan when I change positions or depart from state government.

## Tip: Delete the Easy Stuff

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- It is easy to delete messages that are not work-related, so get rid of them right away 
- Mass mailings
- Newsletters
- Messages from friends and family
- Advertisements
- Junk mail



### Notes:

#### Tip: Delete the easy stuff

When cleaning up your email account, it can help to get rid of the easy stuff, like mass mailings, newsletters, advertisements and messages from friends and family. These types of messages usually are not needed for work purposes. The General Schedule for Non-record Materials authorizes the destruction of these types of email. It is available online at <https://inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement>.

If you sort your messages by sender or recipient name it should be easy to find these. The Outlook search toolbar can also help you find these messages. For example, you could search for "Gongwer" to find all of those newsletters and delete them.

## Tip: Quick Clean-up

9/26

- Some folders should be emptied quickly and frequently
  - Junk
  - Clutter
  - Deleted Items
- Do not use these folders to store work records
  - *Would you store important papers in the trash?*
- Review and verify prior to deletion



### Notes:

#### Tip: Quick Clean-up

If you use Microsoft Outlook, some folders should be emptied quickly (at least monthly, if not sooner). They include Junk, Clutter and Deleted Items.

These folders should not be used for storing work records. After all, you would not store important paper records in the trash.

However, you may need to quickly review the messages in these folders prior to destruction for verification purposes, because you might not agree with Outlook that a particular message is junk or clutter.

## Tip: Organize Email

10/26

- Users are responsible for organizing email
- Avoid storing all of your email in the Inbox or Sent Mail folders
- Messages should be organized into topical or project folders:
  - Easier to find messages
  - Delete entire folder when the retention period is met
  - Avoid weeding individual messages

A screenshot of an email folder list from a software interface. The folders are listed vertically: Personnel, Reference Materials, Retention Schedule Revisions (with a small arrow icon), DEQ, DHHS (with a small arrow icon), DIFS, DNR, DTMB, LC, MDE, MDOT, MSP, SOS, Treasury, RM News, Schedule Routing 2016, TO DO, and Travel.

Personnel  
Reference Materials  
Retention Schedule Revisions  
DEQ  
DHHS  
DIFS  
DNR  
DTMB  
LC  
MDE  
MDOT  
MSP  
SOS  
Treasury  
RM News  
Schedule Routing 2016  
TO DO  
Travel

### Notes:

#### Tip: Organize Email

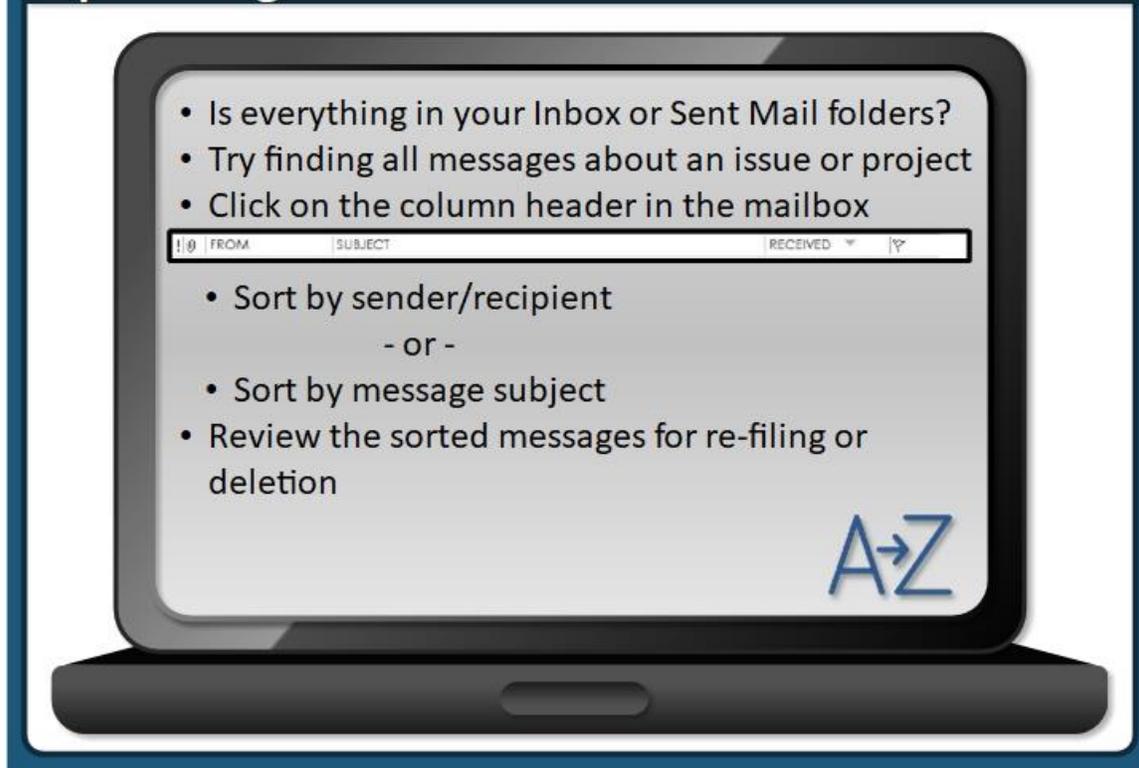
Software, like Microsoft Outlook, does not require that messages be organized - it is the responsibility of the user.

Avoid storing all of your email in the Inbox or Sent Mail folders.

Messages should be organized into topical or project folders, because organized folders make it is easier to find messages. Also, users can delete the entire folder when the retention period is met, and they can avoid weeding individual messages when the messages are organized into folders.

## Tip: Re-organize Email

11/26



### Notes:

#### Tip: Re-organize Email

If all of your messages are currently kept in your Inbox or Sent Mail folders, you may want to try to find all messages about a particular issue or project so you can organize them. You can do this by clicking on the column header in your mailbox and sorting by sender/recipient or by message subject.

*Be aware that names may be formatted differently over time.*

Once the messages are sorted, you should review them and either re-file them (if they have continuing value) or delete them (if their retention period has been met).

## Tip: Email in the Cloud

12/26

- Outlook only retrieves 250 messages per inquiry
- Older Outlook messages are stored in the cloud
- Don't forget to view older messages

MIRS: Clerks Still Holding Ballots From 'Emily' FOIA Request 12/10/2018  
Clerks Still Holding Ballots From 'Emily' FOIA Request The

There are more items in this folder on the server

[Click here to view more on Microsoft Exchange](#)

- Review the search results for re-filing or deletion

### Notes:

#### Tip: Email in the Cloud

Be aware that Outlook will only display up to 250 messages per inquiry.

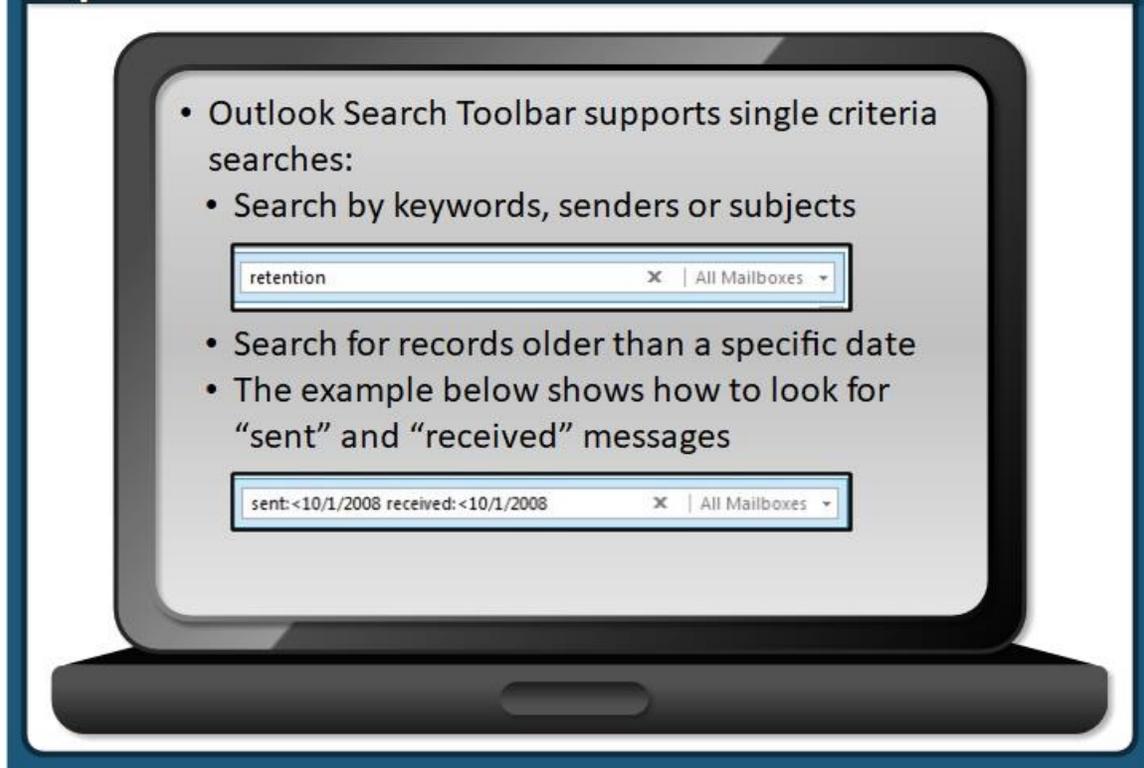
Outlook stores older messages in the cloud. Don't forget to view the older messages. If the folder contains older messages, it will say "There are more items in this folder on the server, click here to view more on Microsoft Exchange" at the bottom of the message list.

All messages in the search result list should be reviewed for re-filing (if they have continuing value) or deletion (if their retention period has been met).

Be aware of litigation holds, FOIA requests, or other activities that affect the retention of records.

## Tip: Outlook Search Toolbar

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### Notes:

#### Tip: Outlook Search Toolbar

Microsoft Outlook has a search toolbar that supports single criteria searches, such as keywords, senders, subject lines, dates, etc.

Phrases can be searched by putting the words inside quotation marks, like "retention schedule". Boolean operators like "and" "or" can be used too.

The search tool can also look for messages sent and received before a particular date. For example, if you want to find all messages that were sent or received prior to 10/1/2008, you should type "sent:<10/1/2008 received:<10/1/2008". This search can be very useful for cleaning-up messages that have met their retention period.

Note: some email systems are configured to automatically delete messages after a specified period of time. These configurations affect more than the Inbox. They delete messages that are stored in folders, archives and other spaces too.

## Tip: Outlook Search Tools

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- Click on the Outlook search toolbar to open the Search Tools ribbon for advanced options



- Outlook can search a specific mailbox, such as the Inbox, or it can search all mailboxes
- Searching "All Mailboxes" is recommended when the messages could be located in multiple places

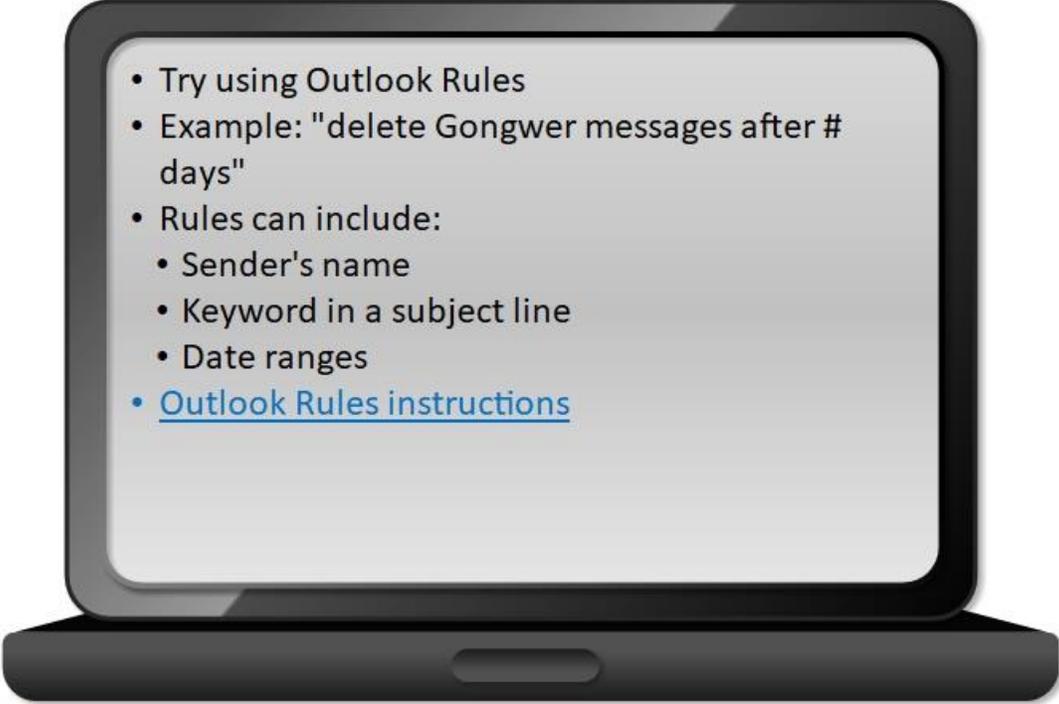
### Notes:

#### Tip: Outlook Search Tools

Outlook provides search tools that support advanced searching options, such as searching by multiple criteria. For example, these tools support searching for a person and a word in the subject line in a single search.

Click on the search toolbar to open the Search Tools ribbon. For even more functionality, click on the +More button to select another criteria to add, or go to the Search Tools button and select Advanced Find to open the Advanced Find screen.

Outlook can search a specific mailbox, such as the Inbox, or it can search all mailboxes. Searching "All Mailboxes" is recommended when the messages could be located in multiple places.

- 
- Try using Outlook Rules
  - Example: "delete Gongwer messages after # days"
  - Rules can include:
    - Sender's name
    - Keyword in a subject line
    - Date ranges
  - [Outlook Rules instructions](#)

### Notes:

#### Tip: Mailbox Rules

If you use Microsoft Outlook, it has a Rules tool that may be of use to you. The tool allows users to create rules that will identify email that meets specified criteria. Outlook can automatically perform the desired task on those messages. For example, Outlook can delete Gongwer messages after a specified number of days, such as 30 days.

Rules can include the sender's name, keywords, date ranges and more.

Microsoft created instructions that explain how the Rules tool works. Read the instructions, if you want to learn more about how to use this tool to manage email messages. They are online at <http://support.office.com/en-US/article/Manage-email-messages-by-using-rules-c24f5dea-9465-4df4-ad17-a50704d66c59>.

## Tip: Email Archive

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- Do not use email archive tools
- Current email accounts provide sufficient storage, so archive is not needed
- If the archive is stored on the hard drive
  - It is not backed up
  - It is not accessible to anyone who is not using the machine
    - This can create challenges for FOIA and litigation
- Clean-up the old email archive



### Notes:

#### Tip: Email Archive

Many email systems offer an email archive tool. Employees should not use these tools. Current email accounts that are using cloud storage provide a lot of storage space, so the archive is not needed.

If the archive is stored on a computer hard drive, it is not backed up. If the hard drive crashes, the email archive will be lost. Also, the email archive will not be accessible when the user is not physically using the computer. This means that a person cannot access an archive located on a hard drive when they are logged into a different computer. It can also cause problems when trying to respond to FOIA and litigation requests, because FOIA and Litigation Coordinators will need to take the machine to access the email archive.

It is a good idea to clean-up old email archives, especially if you have forgotten what is stored in them.

## Tip: Printing

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- Some offices still maintain paper filing systems
- If you print email, delete the electronic email
- Avoid duplicate record storage, keep only one



### Notes:

#### Tip: Printing

Some offices still maintain paper filing systems. If you print an email, delete the electronic email. Avoid duplicate record storage, and only keep one.

## Tip: Saving Messages Locally

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- Messages can be saved to any electronic storage space
  - Network drive, computer hard drive, cloud, etc.
- Some storage spaces are safer than others
- Some storage spaces help co-workers share records
- Messages can be saved in multiple formats
  - MSG and PDF are recommended formats



### Notes:

#### Tip: Saving Messages Locally

Email can be stored in any electronic storage space where other electronic records are kept. These include network drives, computer hard drives, cloud, etc.

Keep in mind that some storage spaces are safer than others. For example, computer hard drives are generally not backed up. External storage devices can be stolen or lost, which is why they should be encrypted if they contain confidential information.

Also, some storage spaces help co-workers share records, like network shared drives. This helps reduce the storage of duplicate records.

There are multiple file formats that can be used to save email messages. The MSG and PDF formats are recommended. The next slide will explain how to save messages using these two formats.

## Tip: Converting Email

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- Drag and drop messages into File Explorer
  - Works with individual or multiple messages
- Convert to MSG Format:
  - Go to the File menu and select Save As
  - Select Outlook Message Format (.msg)
- Convert to PDF Format:
  - Go to the File menu and select Print
  - Select Adobe PDF as the Printer (.pdf)
- *Delete the original message after a copy is saved*



### Notes:

#### Tip: Converting Email

You can drag and drop messages into Windows Explorer. This works with individual or multiple messages.

Or, you can convert messages to the MSG Format: Go to the File menu and select Save As, then select Outlook Message Format (.msg).

Or, you can convert to PDF Format: Go to the File menu and select Print, then select Adobe PDF as the Printer (.pdf).

Don't forget to delete the original message after a copy is saved elsewhere for recordkeeping.

## Tip: Are you done yet?

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- Completed communications should be moved to the designated filing system
- Incomplete communications should remain in your email account
  - Use Inbox or Sent Mail folders to remind yourself to follow-up on an issue, or as a reminder that you are waiting on someone else
  - Use follow up flags to help with completing a correspondence



### Notes:

#### Tip: Are you done yet?

Another tip for maintaining your email account is to ensure that communications related to **completed** issues, tasks or activities are moved to the designated filing system; while communications related to **incomplete** issues, tasks or activities should remain in your email account. The email box should be a reminder that you need to follow-up, or that you are waiting on someone else. It may help to use follow up flags that will remind you to complete a conversation.

## Tip: Keep the Last Message

21/26

- Often the last message in a conversation is the only one that needs to be kept
- Note: if last message does not contain all previous communications and attachments, some or all of the older messages may need to be kept too



### Notes:

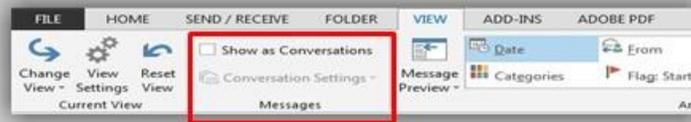
#### **Tip: Keep the last message**

Often the last message in a conversation is the only one that needs to be retained. If last message *does not* contain all previous communications and attachments, some or all of the older messages may need to be kept too.

## Tip: Conversations Tool

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- Outlook Conversations tool can group all messages in a conversation chain
- Tool sorts the messages chronologically



### Notes:

#### Tip: Conversations Tool

If you use Microsoft Outlook, you might want to try using the Conversations tool to identify and delete older messages in a chain. The Conversations tool will group all messages in a conversation chain together and sort them chronologically. To turn on this tool, click on the View tab to open the View ribbon. Click the Show as Conversations checkbox.

## Tip: Keep it Clean

23/26

- Build new habits - don't let your mailbox grow out of control
- Know the retention periods for your email
  - Delete all email older than the maximum timeframe
  - Clean up your email account at least once a year



### Notes:

#### Tip: Keep it clean

Review messages in your email account on a regular basis, such as daily, weekly, monthly, or as projects end. Re-file or delete messages, as appropriate. Try to build new habits so the mailbox does not grow out of control. Know the retention periods for your email. Delete all email older than the maximum timeframe. Clean up your email account at least once a year.

## Tip: Temporarily Suspend Destruction

24/26

Check with your supervisor about temporarily suspending deletion of email, if you suspect the records need to be kept for legal activities like:

- FOIA
- Litigation
- Audit
- Investigation



### Notes:

#### Tip: Temporarily Suspend Destruction

Check with your supervisor about temporarily suspending deletion of email, if you suspect the records need to be kept for legal activities like:

- FOIA
- Litigation
- Audit
- Investigation

## Tip: Empty the Trash

25/26

- Don't forget to empty the deleted items folder
- Messages are not really gone until the trash is emptied and the backup is cleared
  - Remember that older Outlook messages are stored in the cloud (see slide #12)
  - Only 250 messages are loaded each time, so you may need to empty the trash multiple times



### Notes:

#### Tip: Empty the Trash

Do not forget to empty the deleted items folder frequently. Do not use this folder to store work records. After all, you probably do not store important paper records in the trash...

Be aware that messages are not really gone until the trash is emptied and the email system backup is cleared. Remember that older Outlook messages are stored in the cloud (slide #12 provided instructions for accessing those messages). Only 250 messages are loaded each time, so you may need to empty the trash multiple times.

Hopefully these tips will help you keep and maintain a clean email account.

Please visit the  
**Records Management Services'**  
website for more information.

Thank you.

Find Records Management Services online at  
[inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement](https://inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement)



Exit Class

**Notes:**

**Need Assistance?**

Hopefully these tips will help you keep and maintain a clean email account. Please visit the Records Management Services' website for more information. Thank you.

Find Records Management online at <https://inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement>.