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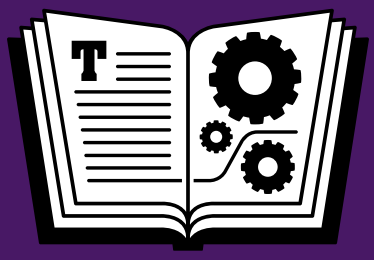

TAKE CONTROL OF

APPLE MAIL

COVERS MAIL IN
10.11 El Capitan & iOS 9

by JOE KISSELL

$20

3RD EDITION

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Apple Mail, Third Edition,* version 3.0, published in September 2015 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Dan Frakes.

This book helps you understand the most effective ways to use Apple's Mail app in OS X 10.11 El Capitan and iOS 9, including customization and troubleshooting. It also helps you manage your incoming and outgoing email efficiently.

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Basics

To review background information that might help you understand this book better, such as finding System Preferences and working with files in the Finder, read Tonya Engst's free *Read Me First: A Take Control Crash Course*, available on the Web or as a standalone ebook in PDF, EPUB, and the Kindle's Mobipocket format.

What's New in the Third Edition

This fully revised third edition brings the book up to date with the numerous changes in Mail running under OS X 10.11 El Capitan and iOS 9. As a result, most of the new material is referenced in the chapter Learn What's New in El Capitan and iOS 9 Mail. In addition to topics mentioned in that chapter, this edition adds:

- An entirely new chapter, Extend and Automate Mail, which discusses the use of plug-ins, add-ons, AppleScript, and Automator
- A new sidebar for those setting up encryption in Mail: Using the Same Certificate on Multiple Macs
- A sidebar called About the Activity Window, which describes the new way El Capitan shows activity

Note: For help with Mail in OS X 10.9 Mavericks and iOS 7, you can download the first edition of this book; for OS X 10.10 Yosemite and iOS 8, you can download the second edition. To find the older editions, visit Ebook Extras on the Web and look under the Blog heading.

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Introduction

If Apple Mail is your email client of choice under OS X 10.11 El Capitan or iOS 9, as it is for me, this book will help you get more out of it. You'll understand the app better, learn useful tricks and techniques, and even become a more effective correspondent. I hope and expect that by the time you finish this book, you'll be a much happier Mail user than when you started.

Of course, merely installing El Capitan may improve your happiness! The versions of Mail in Mavericks and Yosemite had a lot of shortcomings, and were widely (and justifiably) criticized. In El Capitan, Apple has clearly taken that criticism to heart, and has made Mail more reliable, faster, and easier to use. Don't get me wrong; Mail has *not* been rethought from the ground up as I would have liked, and some of its longstanding irritations remain. But it's pretty darn solid now.

Where trouble spots remain, I help you to avoid, fix, or work around them. And I tell you what I've done to make Mail work better for me. I also help you get more out of Mail, enhance your email workflow, and much more.

It's also worth noting that even though I've written books about Mail, I have no particular allegiance to it as an app. I just want the best email tool I can find for my particular needs. So I've tried quite a few alternatives—with an open mind and a complete willingness to jump ship if I found something better. The thing is, *even at its worst,* I still liked Apple Mail the best. Given the way I've customized my settings, and the third-party plug-ins I've added, I haven't yet found another app that gives me all the capabilities I've come to depend on in Mail. It's like that favorite pair of jeans that you still wear despite the odd tear or stain. I hope you'll feel the same way after reading about the many ways you can improve on Mail's out-of-the-box state.

Mail under iOS, while less powerful, is remarkably good and getting better all the time. The biggest issue with iOS 9 Mail is that, like most mobile email clients, it still lacks many of the useful features found in

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the desktop version, which means iOS users will need to develop a strategy that takes those differences into account.

Regardless of whether you use El Capitan, iOS 9, or both, this book is about how to do useful things with Mail—how to bend Mail to your will (to the extent possible) and feel as though you are genuinely in control of your email. Along the way, I'll show you how to do more with the parts of Mail that work, and I'll identify and tell you how to deal with as many problems as I can. But this isn't a comprehensive reference guide: I'll largely ignore basic tasks that you either know how to do already or can figure out easily by consulting the Help menu. I'm assuming you already know your way around an email client and mainly want guidance with less-than-obvious tasks and features.

Several chapters apply equally to Mail in El Capitan and iOS 9, but most of the book focuses on Mail in El Capitan, which is only right, since it has far more features (and problems) than the iOS version. The final chapter, Use Mail in iOS 9, covers the differences between the two platforms as well as the special strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies in the iOS 9 version of Mail.

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Apple Mail Quick Start

Although you can jump directly to any topic of interest, I suggest starting with the first few chapters to get a solid foundation. Chapters are marked with [OS X] and/or [iOS] to show the platforms they cover.

Understand what you're dealing with:

- Discover Mail's new features and design changes. Read Learn What's New in El Capitan and iOS 9 Mail. [OS X/iOS]
- Get a grip on POP, IMAP, SMTP, Exchange, and more as you Learn about Email Protocols. [OS X/iOS]
- Make sure you understand account-setup details and how Mail deals with common tasks. See Master Mail Concepts. [OS X]

Find the ideal Mail setup for your needs:

- Tailor Mail to your needs and tastes with settings, shortcuts, plug-ins, and more as you Customize Mail. [OS X]
- Take Mail even further. See Extend and Automate Mail. [OS X]
- Gmail user? You're in for some weirdness, so there's a whole chapter just for you: Use Gmail with Mail. [OS X]

Become a better Mail user:

- Search like a pro. Read Find Your Messages. [OS X]
- Manage incoming and saved messages as you Take Control of Your Inbox, and then learn the best ways of sending and replying to email in Become a Better Correspondent. [OS X/iOS]

Handle exceptional tasks:

- When privacy is a priority, Sign and Encrypt Messages. [OS X/iOS]
- Perplexed by an error message or other misbehavior in the Mac version of Mail? Read Fix Mail Problems. [OS X]
- Make the most of Mail on your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch. See Use Mail in iOS 9. [iOS]

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Learn What's New in El Capitan and iOS 9 Mail

The El Capitan and iOS 9 versions of Mail contain useful new features and design changes. Skim over this chapter to see which of these changes may be important to you.

Mail Changes in El Capitan

The El Capitan version of Mail looks almost identical to its OS X 10.10 Yosemite predecessor at first glance, but it's much different underneath. Here are the major changes I think you should be aware of:

- **Gesture support:** Using a trackpad, you can now swipe across items in your message list with two, three, or four fingers to navigate, mark as read/unread, delete, or archive. See Gestures.
- **Full-screen improvements:** In Full Screen mode (including Split View), it's now possible to minimize messages you're composing within Mail and navigate to other messages without having to save and later reopen a draft. See Full Screen Mode.
- **Better alias handling:** Mail now offers a convenient built-in interface for adding aliases to any compatible account. See Configure Alternative From Addresses.
- **Improved Data Detectors:** In El Capitan, Mail makes it much easier to see and work with contact and calendar data found in messages. See Data Detectors.
- **Natural language searching:** You can now search just by asking Mail for what you want. See Perform a Natural Language Search.
- **Under-the-hood improvements:** Mail in El Capitan fixes quite a few bugs. It also improves performance markedly, and includes a rewritten IMAP engine that's faster and smarter, downloading the messages you're most likely to need now before syncing older ones.

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Noteworthy Changes in Yosemite and Mavericks

If you skipped Yosemite or Mavericks, you may be unaware of the many changes Apple made to Mail in the two prior releases of OS X. I won't detail them all here, but a few are worth knowing about.

Added in Yosemite:

- **Mail Drop:** Mail Drop lets you send large attachments painlessly by automatically storing them in iCloud and putting links to them in your messages. See Mail Drop.
- **Markup:** This feature enables you to annotate or sign a graphic or PDF in an outgoing email message. See Markup.
- **Handoff:** Start composing a message on one device (Mac or iOS) and continue it on another with a click or a tap. See Handoff.
- **Automatic setting detection:** Lets Mail figure out settings for authentication, port, SSL, and the like. See the sidebar Automatic Setting Detection and read Fix the "Incorrect Settings" Problem.

Added (or changed) in Mavericks:

- **iCloud account syncing:** Use iCloud Drive to sync settings and rules for all your email accounts (not just your iCloud account) with your other Macs.
- **No more option to force plain-text messages:** In previous versions of Mail, a Terminal command forced all incoming or saved messages to display in plain text, if available. Unfortunately for lovers of plain text (like me), that command no longer works, and the menu commands to switch among message formats are gone.
- **Gmail changes:** Starting with Mavericks, Mail attempts to meet Gmail on its own terms, with mixed success.
- **IMAP caching:** Previously, you could choose, for IMAP accounts, whether to download and cache full messages including attachments, only message text, only read messages, or none of the above. Now, downloading the full text of every message is mandatory for IMAP accounts, though you can opt to skip attachments.

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Mail Changes in iOS 9

The iOS 9 version of Mail also contains several important new features (not all of which are covered in detail in this book):

- **Group addressing:** I've long complained that it wasn't possible to address a messages to a group from Contacts. Now it is, although not without some limitations. See Address a Message to a Group.
- **Expanded attachment support:** Mail always made it pretty easy to add photos and videos to your outgoing messages, but attaching other files was complicated. Now you can attach files from iCloud Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, Google Drive, and other sources without ever leaving Mail. You can also save incoming attachments to any of these places. See Handle Attachments.
- **Additional swipe option:** When you swipe left or right on a message in a mailbox view, you can now configure an additional option, Move, which displays your mailbox list; tap a mailbox to move the message there. Oh, and speaking of swipe gestures, they now show icons (such as) rather than text (such as Trash). See Use Swipe Gestures.
- **Markup:** The Markup feature in OS X Mail has made its way to iOS 9: you can now annotate graphics in outgoing email messages. See Outgoing Attachments.
- **Improved search:** When using the search field, Mail now offers suggestions (such as people and subjects containing your search term) and, in some cases, a progress bar. See Search for Messages.
- **More white space on iPad:** When you view messages on an iPad, you'll notice that they have much larger left and right margins than before (and they're wider in portrait mode than landscape mode). Apple presumably felt this would enhance readability.
- **Slide Over:** Like many (but not all) iOS 9 apps, Mail supports the new Slide Over feature on iPads. This means you can swipe from the right edge of the screen while Mail is open to see content from

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another app; conversely, while viewing another app, you can slide over to see Mail. That way, you have access to more than one source of data at a time.

- **Go Back links:** If you tap a link in Mail to open it in Safari, you'll see a Back to Mail link in the upper-left corner of the screen. Similarly, if you tap a link in Safari that opens an email message, you'll see a Back to Safari link. Whenever one app sends you to another, this extra link makes it easier to get back to where you were.
- **Low Power mode:** If you go to Settings >Battery on an iPhone, you can tap Low Power Mode to reduce background processes and thereby extend your battery life. I mention that here because one aspect of Low Power mode is that your iPhone stops fetching new mail in the background.
- **3D Touch features:** If you have a new iPhone 6s or 6s Plus, the new 3D Touch capability lets you perform different actions depending on how hard you press on the screen.
  - In Mail, you can press lightly on a message in any mailbox view to preview it (a *peek*) and press harder to open it normally (a *pop*). (And, while displaying the peek preview, you can swipe left or right to see buttons such as Trash and Mark as Read/Unread.) You can do the same thing with a contact's profile photo and other data.
  - You can press on the Mail icon on your home screen to compose a new message.
  - In any app, including Mail, when you press on an on-screen keyboard, it behaves like a trackpad, enabling you to position the insertion point and select text more easily.

  For more details, see Apple's 3D Touch page.

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Noteworthy Changes in iOS 8

If you're skipping straight from iOS 7 to iOS 9, you'll want to be aware of these Mail-related changes that happened in iOS 8:

- **Expanded swipe controls:** iOS 8 added new options (and a degree of configurability) to the Swipe Left and Swipe Right gestures in the message list, including a distinction between short and long swipes. (iOS 9 expands on this.) See Use Swipe Gestures.
- **Minimize new messages:** iOS 8 made it possible to minimize the message you're composing to the bottom of the screen (and you can even do so to multiple messages) to make it easier to switch between what you're typing and other messages. See Minimize In-progress Messages.
- **Thread notifications:** You can request to be notified when a new message arrives in a specific thread. See Manage Notifications.
- **Contacts and Calendar shortcuts:** Banners sometimes appear at the tops of incoming messages with shortcuts for adding the sender to Contacts or events to Calendar. See Use Calendar and Contact Shortcuts.
- **Show nicknames and short names:** As in El Capitan, this setting gives you the option to show nicknames when available, or to use a short version of a name (such as first name only, or first initial and last name); the setting applies to both Mail and the Contacts app. You can make any desired adjustments in Settings > Mail, Contacts, Calendars > Short Name (in the Contacts section).

Besides these major changes, iOS 8 Mail slightly changed the way signed and encrypted messages were handled (see Sign and Encrypt Messages in iOS 9), and added support for Zip archives (see Incoming Attachments).

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Learn about Email Protocols

The word "protocol" may sound complicated, but it's just a way of describing how your email program (in this case, Mail) talks to a mail server. If you know a few basics about email protocols, you'll have an easier time understanding Mail's interface and solving problems.

Although you may not be aware of it, most email accounts involve two separate systems—one for receiving and another for sending—and these often use entirely different servers. You probably use the same username and password for each, but behind the scenes, each account may function as two separate accounts:

- Your incoming account fetches email from your mail server and delivers it to you using a mail delivery protocol—such as POP (Post Office Protocol) or IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol). Just ahead, I explain more about POP and IMAP, I discuss common IMAP and POP Misconceptions, and I offer guidance if you're still using POP and want to Switch from POP to IMAP (you probably do). I also mention a few important points about iCloud and Gmail accounts, both of which also use IMAP.
- Your outgoing account uses a mail transfer protocol called SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) to send email from your machine to your mail server, and then (usually through a number of intermediate steps) to the recipient's mail server.

Microsoft Exchange accounts are a bit different. They act like IMAP accounts in many ways, but use a single—and an entirely different—protocol for receiving and sending mail, as well as calendar items, contacts, and other information.

Note: In this book I refer to IMAP (including iCloud and Gmail) accounts and Exchange accounts, which manage and work with messages on the mail server, as *server-based* accounts to distinguish them from POP accounts, which store all retrieved messages locally.

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In this chapter I also discuss the concepts Fetch, Push, and IMAP IDLE, which apply to multiple account types and affect how rapidly your email client can find out about new messages.

POP

A POP account works like this:

- First, your client (that is, your email program) asks the server for the list of messages in your Inbox.
- Then, depending on your client's capabilities and settings, it downloads either all the messages, just the messages you select, or all messages under a specified size, to your local device.
- Finally (and optionally), your client instructs the server to delete the server copy of some or all of the messages.

The server doesn't keep track of whether a message has been downloaded, read, or deleted; only your client knows this, and the assumption underlying the protocol is that you want to read, organize, and store your mail on a single device, using the server only as a conduit to receive your mail. If you want to store any messages in mailboxes other than your Inbox, when you create those mailboxes in your email client, they're stored locally (not on the server); the messages you move to these mailboxes are thus also stored locally.

You can usually set your client to leave messages on the server (rather than delete them immediately after retrieving them) and then check your email with a different client (or on a different device), but all those messages will appear to be "new" and unread on every other client or device. This, among other reasons, makes POP a poor option if you work with email on multiple computers and devices.

In addition, although iOS supports POP, iOS Mail doesn't let you create new mailboxes to file messages locally. That means an iOS device doesn't work well as the *sole* device used with a POP account, and because POP works best when used with a single device, this mismatch of capabilities makes POP less than ideal for an iOS device.

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Master Mail Concepts

As I said in the Introduction, this book isn't about basics, as such. However, as I've corresponded with many Mail users over the years, I've discovered that there are certain concepts that Apple hasn't made self-explanatory, and that therefore tend to trip people up. In order to understand and act on much of the rest of this book, you need to grasp a few concepts that are, perhaps, unnecessarily confusing. In this chapter I walk you through the ones I consider most important.

Most of the items in this chapter pertain only to the El Capitan version of Mail, but if you're an iOS user, be sure to read Special Mailboxes, much of which is also applicable to iOS.

Account Setup

Setting up new accounts in Mail has gotten easier in recent versions, especially if you're using one of the major email providers Mail already knows about (iCloud, Exchange, Google/Gmail, Yahoo, and AOL)—almost the entire procedure is automated. However, there are still a few gotchas, especially if you're using a different provider.

Pick a Preference Pane

For starters, there are two places where you can add, edit, or remove accounts: in Mail > Preferences > Accounts and in System Preferences > Internet Accounts (which you can also reach from within Mail by choosing Mail > Accounts).

Why two places, and when should you use which?

- The reason for the Internet Accounts pane of System Preferences is twofold. First, many account types (including iCloud, Exchange, and Gmail) include more features than just email, and affect more apps than just Mail, so Internet Accounts provides a central location where you can enable or disable individual data types like Mail, Calendars, Contacts, and Notes for each account. Second, some

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account types (like Twitter and Facebook) are used by OS X but not by specific, built-in apps, and so it makes sense to provide one central location to set up all these accounts.

- The reason for the Accounts pane of Mail preferences is, of course, to make it more convenient to add an email account when you're already working in Mail—and because you may need to configure any of numerous email account settings that are specific to Mail, and that therefore would be inappropriate for Apple to put in System Preferences.

You can add a new account to Mail in either place, and after you do so, both locations will reflect that account. Beyond that, the Internet Accounts preference pane gives you less control over the minute details of email account settings than Mail's Accounts pane does, although there are a couple of things you can do only in Internet Accounts.

Here are the specifics:

- **Mail's Accounts pane:** Visit this pane to edit outgoing (SMTP) servers, add secondary From addresses, change the behavior of Special Mailboxes, and adjust details such as whether to download attachments, use an IMAP path prefix, or use IMAP IDLE (all in the Advanced view).
- **Internet Accounts pane of System Preferences:** Use this to enable or disable account features such as Calendars and Contacts, delete any accounts synced via iCloud, or to set up Internet accounts that don't involve Mail.

Force POP or IMAP

When you create a new account (in Mail > Preferences > Accounts, or in System Preferences > Internet Accounts), you start by clicking the plus button and selecting an account type. If the type you want isn't on that list (such as a standard IMAP or POP account), in Mail, you select Add Other Mail Account and then click Continue; or in Internet Accounts, you click Add Other Account, select Add a Mail Account, and click Create. Then you fill in your name, email address, and password.

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Customize Mail

Mail isn't the fanciest or most powerful email client for the Mac, and many people have dismissed it as being too unsophisticated for email power users. I agree with that sentiment to a point—in its *default* configuration, Mail isn't a fantastic email program. However, you can customize Mail in many ways, including by adding plug-ins that both dramatically increase its capabilities and modify standard behaviors to become much more useful. The result is that with a bit of effort, you can turn a so-so email client into a deluxe and highly optimized tool.

In this chapter, I acquaint you with some of the most important ways to customize Mail that don't require any additional software. I don't list every single option, nor do I go into tremendous detail, but I want to make sure you're aware of what so many Mail users aren't—you don't have to live with the stock version of Mail, and you can improve your enjoyment of the app a great deal with a bit of grooming.

Note: Later, in Extend and Automate Mail, I discuss third-party plug-ins, AppleScript, Automator, and other ways of enhancing Mail.

Sidebar

The sidebar is the area on the left of Mail's main window that contains all your mailboxes. Don't see it? Choose View > Show Mailbox List. Prefer to keep it hidden? Choose View > Hide Mailbox List. (Apple seems to think Mail is easier to use when the sidebar is hidden, but for most people with multiple accounts or more than a few mailboxes, the sidebar is indispensable.)

You can also rearrange items in the sidebar by dragging them to new locations, with certain limitations:

- Top-level categories with titles in bold (such as Mailboxes, which contains your Special Mailboxes; Smart Mailboxes; and individual

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accounts) can be reordered—for example, you might want to show your smart mailboxes at the top of the list and your special mailboxes at the bottom.

- Within the Mailboxes category, the order of (unified) special mailboxes is fixed; for example, Drafts always appears above Sent. However, you can reorder accounts *within* a unified special mailbox. For example, if your Gmail account is listed before iCloud under Sent, you can drag iCloud above Gmail—and that modified order will be reflected under *all* your unified special mailboxes.
- You can reorder the mailboxes within any given account.
- You can click Show or Hide next to a sidebar category to expand or collapse its contents (see Hidden Interface Elements), but you can't manually hide the categories themselves. On the other hand, Mail automatically hides the names of accounts that have no sub-mailboxes beneath them.

Mail used to have a Mail Activity pane at the bottom of the sidebar. It's gone now, but an abbreviated version (**Figure 10**) appears briefly in the same location when Mail is performing a background task that takes more than a moment.

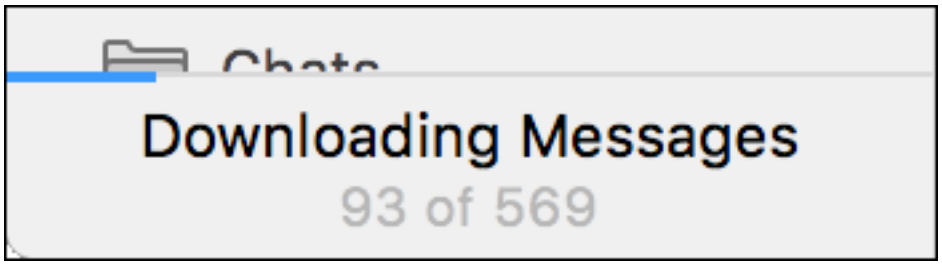

Figure 10: This mini activity monitor appears at the bottom of the sidebar when Mail is busy doing something in the background that might take a while. Notice the thin blue progress bar at the top.

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Extend and Automate Mail

In my opinion, the best thing about Mail is its extensibility. If I had to use the plain, unadorned version of Mail as Apple provides it, my productivity and happiness would decrease significantly—and I'd probably switch to another app in short order. But with the addition of a few third-party plug-ins and other tools, Mail becomes vastly more versatile and powerful.

In this chapter I want to introduce you to some of the many ways you can extend Mail's capabilities. First, I'll show you over 20 plug-ins that can add or modify features. For anyone who needs to save and search messages outside Mail, I next turn to apps that can Archive and Search Messages, and then tell you about utilities to Remove Duplicate Messages. I wrap up the chapter with an introduction to the ways you can Use AppleScript and Automator to automate Mail.

There's a lot of information in this chapter, and I don't want you to think you need each product I mention. (In fact, some of them would overlap and possibly conflict with each other.) Rather, my intention is to acquaint you with a representative sample of the possibilities.

Joe's Favorites

If you're curious which of the tools from this chapter I use myself, here's my list of personal favorites:

- AppleScript
- CargoLifter
- DEVONthink (see Archive and Search Messages)
- GPGMail
- Mail Act-On
- MailTags
- QuoteFix

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Use Third-party Plug-ins

Scores of third-party Mail plug-ins exist. These enable you to change unwanted behaviors, add new features, and enable significant new customization options. For example, plug-ins can stop spam, encrypt email messages, offer advanced message filing options, change the way attachments are handled, modify Mail's method of quoting text in replies, and much more.

I'm not going to list every one of those plug-ins here (although I will mention some places you can look to find more of them). The ones I've selected for this book include those I use myself, ones recommended by friends and colleagues, and others that seemed especially useful or interesting (even if I have no need for them myself).

Some plug-ins come with their own installers. For those that don't, all you have to do is quit Mail, drag the plug-in to `~/Library/Mail/Bundles`, and restart Mail. (See Finding the User Library Folder if you need help locating `~/Library`.)

Plug-ins and OS X Updates

Although I love my Mail plug-ins, one thing I do not love is that almost every time Mail (or OS X) is updated—no matter how tiny or insignificant the update—every plug-in is disabled and must be updated. Mail moves all plug-ins that it deems "incompatible" it to `~/Library/Mail/Bundles (Disabled)`, and moving them back won't reenable them.

What makes Mail think a plug-in is incompatible? Every version of Mail has a special UUID (universally unique identifier), and unless that UUID is included in a plug-in's configuration files, the plug-in won't work.

Most of the time, plug-in developers respond by quickly releasing new versions that add the new UUID, but if you can't wait for an official fix, try the free MailPluginFix, which adds the newest UUID to any disabled Mail plug-ins. It doesn't always work—sometimes developers need to fix bugs or address deeper compatibility problems—but it often does, and it sure beats waiting.

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Use Gmail with Mail

If you have a Gmail account and want to use it in Mail under El Capitan, this chapter is for you. (For information on using Gmail in iOS 9 Mail, see Set Up Gmail as a Regular IMAP Account.) I cover the ways Gmail in Mail differs from Gmail on the Web, the ways Gmail differs from other IMAP providers, how best to configure Mail to use a Gmail account, and how to avoid common problems. All of this, I hope, will help make your experience of using Gmail in Mail as good as it can be.

Note: Everything in this chapter applies equally to standard Gmail accounts and to Google Apps accounts with a custom domain name.

If you don't use Gmail (or don't want to use Mail to access Gmail), there's nothing to see here. Move right ahead to Find Your Messages.

Understand How Mail Works (or Not) with Gmail

If you're accustomed to Gmail's Web interface, you may expect it to work similarly in Mail. On the other hand, if you're used to using Mail with other IMAP accounts, you may expect Gmail accounts to behave the same way. In both cases, the reality will differ quite a bit from your expectation, and you'll have an easier time using the combination of Mail and Gmail if you know more up front about how the two systems try (and sometimes fail) to work together. I'll start by reviewing changes Apple made to Mail's behavior with Gmail accounts starting in 10.9 Mavericks, then discuss Gmail on the Web vs. Gmail in Mail, and finally turn to Gmail vs. Other IMAP Providers.

Note: Although Mail can also access Gmail via POP, I recommend against it and don't cover it in this book. Among other issues, with POP, Mail can't see archived Gmail messages or messages you've sent from your Gmail account using the Web interface.

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How Mavericks Changed Mail's Gmail Behavior

Back in the Mavericks version of Mail, Apple made major changes to the way Mail handled Gmail accounts, and those changes initially resulted in some serious problems. Although Mail's interactions with Gmail are smoother now, its overall approach hasn't changed since then. If this is old news to you, feel free to skip ahead to Gmail on the Web vs. Gmail in Mail. But if you never had much experience using Gmail under Mavericks or Yosemite, you may find the changes surprising. The two biggest differences are as follows:

- **No more duplicates:** In earlier versions of Mail, if you left all your Gmail settings at their defaults, Mail would download at least two copies of each message—one in the All Mail mailbox and one for each label you'd applied in Gmail (since labels in Gmail are translated into mailboxes in Mail when you use IMAP). That made for lots of duplicate messages, wasting bandwidth and disk space. Now, Mail downloads just one copy of each message (the one in All Mail), and invisibly "tags" each message to indicate which other mailbox(es), if any, it should also appear in. That's a better approach, and it means there's no longer any need, using settings on the Gmail Web site, to hide the All Mail label from IMAP clients (unless that's essential for another IMAP client you also use)—and in fact, Mail now works better if All Mail is enabled.
- **Gmail-like archiving:** Speaking of All Mail, the Archive mailbox in Mail's sidebar for Gmail accounts now shows All Mail—that is, what you'd see if you clicked All Mail on the Gmail Web site. And now, when you move a Gmail message to the Archive mailbox (whether by dragging or by clicking the optional Archive button on the toolbar), Mail removes the Inbox label so that the message appears only in Archive (All Mail)—which, again, is exactly what happens on the Gmail site. *However,* pressing Delete when you're viewing a Gmail message actually deletes it (that is, sends it to the Trash mailbox); it does *not* archive the message as some Gmail users might expect. If you dislike this behavior, see Delete2Archive for a plug-in that changes it.

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Find Your Messages

OS X's Spotlight search feature automatically indexes all your Mail messages for super-fast searching, and you can search for them either within Mail or using the system-wide Spotlight menu.

El Capitan adds the capability to search using natural language rather than relying on special keywords or formulations. However, if you want to do complex searches, you can—all the search capabilities from Yosemite are still there too. With a flexible system of search tokens (which I explain in a moment), Boolean searches, and other options, you can find almost any message you can describe.

And, you can even save a search by converting it into a smart mailbox, as I describe at the end of this chapter, in Work Smarter with Smart Mailboxes.

Perform a Natural Language Search

Here's a novel idea: when you're searching for email, just describe what you're looking for in your own words. You can use plain English (or plain whatever-language-you-speak) in Mail's Search field, as well as in system-wide Spotlight searches, to find email messages.

There's no rulebook, no list of approved words or phrases. You just describe what you want. Here are some examples:

- `emails from John Smith`
- `messages to John Smith`
- `messages with "split pea" in the subject`
- `email with "split pea" in the body`
- `email from John Smith in the last week`
- `mail from Morgen including photographs`
- `mail I ignored from Adam`

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- `unread messages from this week`
- `messages from bruce about security`

There are countless other ways to search using natural language, but the point is: don't try to outthink Spotlight. Just ask the question that you're thinking.

Having said that, I should point out a few things I've noticed about natural-language searches in El Capitan mail:

- **Results aren't always exhaustive.** For example, if I ask for unread messages, Mail shows me only *recent* unread messages. You should not assume that because a message doesn't show up in a natural-language search, it doesn't exist.
- **Mail doesn't care about your wording.** Notice how, in the examples above, I interchangeably used `email`, `emails`, `mail`, and `messages`. Mail knows those all mean the same thing. So, don't get hung up on picking exactly the right term.
- **Mail is smart, but it can't read your mind.** If you search for messages from "Bob," you may have a particular person in mind, but Mail doesn't know *which* of the many Bobs in your saved mail you're interested in. Be more specific if the results aren't what you want.
- **Searches may take a while.** Although Mail starts returning search results immediately, it continues to search until it's gone through all your mail; sometimes that can take a while. So if you don't see the messages you're looking for right away, give it a few seconds (or more).

If a natural-language search doesn't turn up what you're looking for, you can always fall back to the old-fashioned way. For starters, you can perform a conventional search (discussed next); for even greater power, you can Search for a Phrase, Use Boolean Expressions, or Search by Date Range. And, even in a natural-language search, you can use the techniques discussed later in this chapter to narrow the search field.

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Take Control of Your Inbox

Does your Inbox contain hundreds of messages? Thousands? Tens of thousands? If so, you may find it nearly impossible to tell which messages you've dealt with and which still require action, and finding a particular message in that long list may be a daunting challenge. You need to take control of your Inbox!

Although everyone's different, I'd like to offer some suggestions that will help you manage the flow of incoming messages. I don't particularly care whether you do things *my* way, but please think carefully about the types of messages you receive and come up with a plan to deal with them that works for you.

I begin this chapter with a series of pointers that apply equally to El Capitan (and other desktop platforms) and iOS. Then I discuss specific approaches for each platform in Develop an Email Strategy.

Take Responsibility

The first step to taking control of your Inbox is recognizing that you, and only you, bear the responsibility for making your own email manageable. If you feel overwhelmed by email, don't point the finger at email as a medium—or at Apple Mail, your email provider, or your correspondents. You can make email work for you, but as with a diet or fitness program, it requires time, effort, and perhaps discomfort on your way to success. No app, service, or technique can do all that for you magically, even though such things can certainly help a bit.

As I said in my TidBITS article It's Not Email That's Broken, It's You, email as such isn't the problem, but rather the bad habits many people have gotten into when it comes to dealing with their email. Perhaps your mother, like my mother, was fond of saying, "This room isn't going to clean itself up!" By the same token, I can assure you that elves will not appear overnight and answer all your delinquent email, file it away for you, and leave you with an empty Inbox. If you want to feel

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in control of your Inbox, that's going to require some reflection, experimentation, and changes in habit.

So, although I can't solve this problem for you, I can offer some tips and suggestions that, I hope, will point you in the right direction. That's what the remainder of this chapter is about.

Consolidate Your Accounts

Since you're reading this book, I assume you have at least one email account. Maybe you have two (personal and work)—or maybe, like me, you have more than a dozen. My excuse is that I need to have accounts for each major type and provider (including IMAP, POP, iCloud, Exchange, Gmail, AOL, Outlook.com, and Yahoo) for testing purposes because I write about email. But I know lots of people who accumulate accounts (especially free accounts) for no particular reason and then end up wasting time and effort checking, managing, and maintaining them all.

So, allow me to make a few suggestions to make your life simpler and to make Mail in OS X and iOS work better.

Begin by choosing one account to be your primary *personal* email account. (Of course, you may need to keep work email separate, and that's entirely reasonable.) Then, rather than send out change-of-address notices to anyone who might have each of the other addresses—assuming you can even remember who has which one—visit the Web interfaces for all other accounts, set them up to forward incoming messages to your central account, and disable those accounts in Mail on your Macs and iOS devices.

Once you've performed this one-time procedure, your correspondents can keep using your old addresses, but you benefit by having just one place to check for incoming mail and one place to store the messages you want to save. Having fewer accounts to check will make Mail peppier, too.

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Become a Better Correspondent

In the previous chapter, Take Control of Your Inbox, I looked at the ways you can improve your management of incoming email. In this chapter we look at the flip side: handling *outgoing* email. I felt it was important to spend a few pages on this topic, because anyone who doesn't exercise care in sending email becomes part of the problem for other people dealing with their incoming mail.

Lots of people are bad at email—you can probably think of a few examples immediately—and I want to make sure you're not one of them. But even if you're fantastic at sending email, I hope the points I make in this chapter help you to set a good example and teach other people how to improve their email skills.

Don't Be Part of the Problem

The most common mistakes people make when sending email aren't premeditated or malicious; they're simply a matter of not thinking things through—of not looking at email from the recipient's point of view. If your guiding principle is to send only email messages you'd be happy receiving yourself, you're already well on your way to being a better correspondent.

But what counts as email courtesy isn't always obvious, so let me offer several specific tips:

- **Use Bcc for lists:** A few times a month, I receive an email message sent to all the parents of my child's preschool by a member of the parents' association. And all 108 addresses are in the To field, which means I have to scroll past them when viewing the messages on my iPhone before I get to the message body. It also means I know the email address of every other recipient, which not everyone is comfortable sharing publicly.

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When sending a message to multiple people—especially a long list, and even more especially when they don't know each other—put *your own* address in the To or Cc field, and put all the recipient addresses in the Bcc (blind carbon copy) field (see Message Header). That way, each recipient's address is hidden from the other recipients. And they'll thank you for it.

- **Be careful with Reply All and Cc:** Suppose you're the recipient of a message sent to multiple people, and their addresses are in the To or Cc fields. You might be tempted to click Reply All out of habit, but please think before you do. Does everyone else on that list really need to hear what you have to say, or just the sender? Or perhaps a subset of the recipients? You can individually delete email addresses when replying to all, and more often than not, replying to everyone on a long list amounts to unwanted clutter for most of them.

  Similarly, think before adding someone as a Cc recipient. People regularly Cc me on complaints, bug reports, and other matters that vaguely involve a book or article I've written, but really: I don't need to be involved, and I assure you that putting my name on a message you send to Apple (or whomever) won't lend it any more weight. Ask yourself whether the potential Cc recipient truly needs to be involved in a discussion.

- **Don't forward nonsense:** Jokes, funny animal pictures, political screeds, and other such stuff that gets endlessly forwarded is nearly as bad as spam. You can't stop someone from sending this material to you (although you *can* ask politely), but you can certainly make sure you're the last link in the chain. Seriously, no matter how funny or apt you find one of these generic messages, your friends and family don't need to read it.

Tip: A subspecies of "nonsense" is the urban myth, a breathless story about some supposed tragedy, scandal, or other atrocity that sounds plausible, but is in fact false. Sometimes it's hard to know whether a story is fact or fiction, and if in doubt, a good place to check is the Web site Snopes.com.

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Sign and Encrypt Messages

Back in Signatures, I explained how to add a signature to the end of each message with your contact information, a quote, or other content. But a message can also have a *digital signature,* a (normally invisible) string of characters that confirms to the recipient that the message truly comes from the address it appears to come from, and that the message contents haven't been altered in transit.

In addition, Mail can *encrypt* messages, scrambling their contents so that only someone with the necessary key (presumably, the recipient) can view their contents, thereby ensuring private communications.

In this chapter I discuss if and when you should use digital signatures and encryption, how they work behind the scenes, and how to go about signing and encrypting messages in Mail.

Learn When and Why to Sign or Encrypt Messages

Let me start with the essential question of whether, or under what circumstances, you should even think about signing or encrypting messages. It's not something everyone needs to do, and if you never need to do it, you need not bother reading the rest of this chapter. But the need could arise at some point—and even if you don't *need* to sign or encrypt, you may find that there are some benefits to doing so.

Note: One could argue that even though most email doesn't *need* to be encrypted, using encryption routinely (even when not needed) is a smart idea. If you encrypt only certain messages, that could suggest to an attacker that you have something to hide, and that those encrypted messages are where it's hidden.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of email as being private. One person sends a message and someone else receives it; as long as no

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one is looking over either person's shoulder or snooping on their computers when they're not around, we presume that whatever was in that message is known only to the sender and recipient.

Indeed, that's how things work *most* of the time, just as with paper letters: *Most* of the time no one except the intended recipient opens a letter to see what's inside. But mail theft, tampering, accidents, and honest mistakes do occur. It sometimes happens that a person who shouldn't see what's inside an envelope, does. And when the contents of that envelope are highly confidential, sensitive, or valuable, someone else reading your mail can become a serious problem indeed.

Email is no different. It should be private, but it isn't always. Each message exists not only on the computers of the sender and recipient, but also (at least temporarily) on each party's mail server. In addition, a message may pass through any number of intermediate servers and routers, and may be backed up along the way in the data centers of one or more ISPs. In any of these places, a message could be read by an employee of the ISP, and it could be intercepted in transit by a hacker—or a government agency—during its journey from sender to recipient.

("Doesn't SSL encrypt my messages?" you may ask. SSL secures a message only between Mail and the incoming or outgoing mail server, but doesn't prevent someone from reading that message while it's on a mail server, or during other legs of the delivery process.)

Because so many millions of email messages are exchanged every day, the probability that any particular message you send or receive will be read by someone who shouldn't see it is incredibly small—but not zero. So, consider what would happen in one of these situations if the wrong person read email you sent:

- You need to email your accountant detailed information about your income, expenses, and taxes.
- You need to provide someone with your credit card number, social security number, or other sensitive information by email.

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Fix Mail Problems

Even though Mail in El Capitan is more reliable than its predecessors, problems will still occur. I've compiled solutions to some of the most common (and serious) problems in the pages ahead, including difficulties receiving and sending mail, problems with damaged mailboxes, and misbehaving Spotlight searches.

Although some of this information may provide useful background for resolving iOS Mail issues too, the specifics are different; see Troubleshoot iOS Mail Problems for help with Mail in iOS 9.

Fix Incoming Mail Problems

If Mail cannot download incoming messages, the cause may be anything from an incorrect setting in Mail, to a server problem, to a loss of Internet connectivity. Work through each of the following sections until you resolve the problem.

About the Activity Window

To check what Mail is doing behind the scenes, choose Window > Activity. A small floating window appears, displaying detail about each activity Mail is performing. If there's only one activity (and, in El Capitan, I've never seen more than two at once), the mini activity monitor at the bottom of the sidebar shows the same information. And, in El Capitan, the Activity window no longer lets you cancel tasks, as was previously the case.

For these two reasons, there's little point in using the Activity window anymore—just look at the mini activity monitor in the sidebar.

Try Connection Doctor

To open Connection Doctor, choose Window > Connection Doctor. In the Connection Doctor window, Mail lists each incoming and outgoing email account you've configured—even those you've temporarily

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disabled. It attempts to log in to each account, and if it fails with any of them, it shows an explanation of why it failed. These explanations aren't always helpful, but they often give you a good starting point in debugging problems, and are written in refreshingly plain English. If the Connection Doctor window suggests a specific fix, try that first. Otherwise, proceed with the following steps.

Username and Password Errors

If you enter your password in Mail > Preferences > Accounts (or in System Preferences > Internet Accounts), El Capitan stores the password in your keychain (which is usually what you want). If, for security reasons, you prefer for Mail to prompt you for your password each time you connect, leave the Password field blank.

Sometimes, even after successfully checking your email many times with the password you entered, Mail displays a dialog claiming that the mail server has "rejected" your password. Worse, you may re-enter your password—and even select Remember This Password in My Keychain—but find that another error message pops up as soon as you click OK. This annoyance may be due to any number of causes, but most have simple solutions.

If Mail suddenly begins prompting you for your password repeatedly when checking incoming mail (after retrieving it correctly earlier), try these steps in order until the problem goes away:

1. Click Cancel, and then check your email again in a minute or two. Sometimes the problem goes away on its own. (If your account is offline, choose Mailbox > Take All Accounts Online.)

2. Check your keychain. To do so, open Keychain Access, which you can find in `/Applications/Utilities`. Choose Keychain Access > Keychain First Aid. Click the Repair radio button, enter your administrator password, and click Start. If the keychain file had an error, Keychain First Aid will fix it.

3. If the problem persists, return to Keychain Access. Make sure that Passwords or All Items is selected under Category, locate your mail server in the list (for iCloud accounts, the entry's name should show

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Use Mail in iOS 9

So far, the bulk of this book has been about El Capitan Mail. Although I've mentioned iOS 9 Mail from time to time (and some of the things I've discussed apply equally to both platforms), Mail in iOS 9 has enough unique characteristics that it deserves its own chapter. As was the case for El Capitan Mail, I'm not going to cover every feature here. Instead, I want to point out the most important things you need to understand in order to use iOS 9 Mail effectively—especially aspects of Mail that are unclear, obscure, or otherwise confusing.

I begin with a list of the key differences between iOS 9 Mail and OS X Mail. Then I move on to 15 Things Every iOS Mail User Should Know and wrap up with how to Troubleshoot iOS Mail Problems.

iOS 9 Mail vs. OS X Mail

Mail in iOS 9 shares a great deal in common with Mail in El Capitan, so anyone accustomed to one platform should be able to pick up the other easily. Naturally, the iOS version makes accommodations for smaller screens, a touch-screen interface, and the numerous iOS user interface conventions that differ from those of OS X. I won't spell all those out here, but I do think it's worth pointing out several key differences in functionality—as well as a few similarities you may not have noticed.

Here's what you should know about the iOS 9 version of Mail:

- **No rules or spam filtering:** If you want to sort messages or weed out junk mail automatically, it's best to set these tasks up on your mail server. (See Use Rules and Control Spam, respectively.)
- **Push (but no IMAP IDLE):** Mail in iOS supports push delivery of messages from iCloud, Exchange, and Yahoo IMAP accounts—and push works even when Mail isn't open (see Fetch, Push, and IMAP IDLE). However, IMAP servers that offer only IMAP IDLE

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as a way of "pushing" messages don't give you push delivery on an iOS device. As a result, Mail in El Capitan is likely to display messages from such servers *before* Mail in iOS 9.

Push delivery, where applicable, works with your Inbox and—for iCloud and Exchange accounts *only*—with other mailboxes you explicitly set up (see Change Account Settings).

In addition, note that even with iCloud and Exchange accounts, although Mail pushes new messages to your device immediately, it does not push *changes* made on other devices, such as moved or deleted messages. So, if your iOS 9 Mail icon says you have one unread message, and you delete that message on your Mac, the "1" badge won't disappear right away; you may need to open Mail to force it to resynchronize its Inboxes.

- **Limited mailbox syncing:** Related to the last point…whereas the El Capitan version of Mail caches complete copies of all messages in all IMAP and Exchange mailboxes, syncing them in the background, iOS 9 Mail doesn't (which is a good thing, because that would chew up lots of cellular bandwidth and storage space).

  Instead, for IMAP accounts, Mail syncs only the Inbox in the background. For Exchange accounts, you can specify how far back to sync email messages (from a day to a month, or all messages), and as I mentioned in the last point, you can select, for iCloud and Exchange accounts, which mailboxes should have their messages pushed to your device. As for any other mailboxes, Mail syncs them only when you tap on them to display their contents.

  This may be significant if you use server-side filters or rules to sort your messages into mailboxes, because mailboxes other than Inbox won't indicate that they contain any new, unread messages until you manually select them.

- **Autocomplete for multiple addressees:** If you regularly send messages to the same set of addresses (for example, your spouse and your mother), Mail notices this and offers the combination of addresses as an option when autocompleting a partial address (in

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Joe Kissell is the author of numerous books about technology, including *Backing Up Your Mac: A Joe On Tech Guide* and *Take Control of Your Online Privacy*. He is also a contributing editor to TidBITS and a senior contributor to Macworld, and has appeared on the MacTech 25 list (the 25 people voted most influential in the Macintosh community) since 2007. Joe has worked in the Mac software industry since the early 1990s, including positions managing software development for Nisus Software and Kensington Technology Group.

When not writing, Joe likes to travel, walk, cook, eat, and practice t'ai chi. He lives in San Diego with his wife, Morgen Jahnke; their sons, Soren and Devin; and their cat, Zora. To contact Joe about this book, send him email and *please* include `Take Control of Apple Mail` in the subject of your message so his spam filters won't intercept it.

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