

# Email: Get Started with the Mail App

## Easily Manage Your Email Using the Mail App in Windows 11 and 10

### This article shows you how to:

- Set up your email account in the Mail app
- Read, write, send and organise email messages
- Switch off the Mail app's most annoying settings and features

Do you have to visit a website to find out whether any new email has arrived, or start a program on your PC to see whether anything is waiting for you? If so, try the built-in email app in Windows 11 and 10. It's a fairly simple affair, as its simple name – Mail – suggests, but it handles all the basics. Best of all, Windows will give you a notification whenever a new message arrives, whether or not the Mail app is currently open. Read on to learn how to get the Mail app set up and working with your email account.



### Contents:

A Quick Introduction to the Mail App .....	E 420/2
The First Step: Add Your Email Account.....	E 420/3
The Basics: Read, Write, Send and Receive Messages.....	E 420/7
Folders: Organising Your Messages.....	E 420/13
Tips and Suggestions to Get the Best from Mail .....	E 420/16

## A Quick Introduction to the Mail App

*Work with several email accounts in one place*

Simple it may be, but the Mail app is intended to be the only email program you need. If you have two or more email accounts, you can add them all to Mail and you'll be able to see and read all your messages in one place. And if you currently have to visit a website and sign in to see whether you've got any new messages, the Mail app can put an end to that as well.

*Your ISP's email account...*

It's likely that your main (or only) email address is the one given to you by your Internet Service Provider (ISP) – BT, Sky, TalkTalk or Plusnet, for example – and in this article I'll explain how to get that type of account set up and working in Mail.

*... and/or popular webmail accounts*

But perhaps you've set up a free email account with Google Gmail, Yahoo! Mail or Microsoft's Outlook.com. If so, you can manage that account in Mail too, and I'll explain how along the way.



Do you sign into Windows using a Microsoft account? And does that account have an email address that ends with outlook.com, hotmail.com or hotmail.co.uk, live.com or live.co.uk? If so, you'll find that your Mail app already has that email account set up: it's already receiving email (if anyone sends messages to that address) and you can send messages from it.

Nevertheless, you don't have to use that account: feel free to just ignore it and set up Mail to work with the email address you do actively use.

*Learn the basics and more*

Despite being simple, there are a few aspects to using Mail that aren't immediately obvious, such as how to create new folders or save 'draft' messages and return to them later, and I'll explain those later in this article. There are also a couple of things you might find a little annoying about it, and I'll show you how to sort those out.

## The First Step: Add Your Email Account

Without further ado, we'll start the Mail app and get your email account set up. There are several ways to open the app and you can choose whichever you prefer:

*Start the Mail app*

- Do you see the app's icon pinned to your taskbar – an envelope symbol? If so, click that icon.
- If you open the Start menu and look at the 'Pinned' section in Windows 11 or the tiles in Windows 10, you should see a **Mail** item with the same envelope symbol: click that item.
- If you scroll down to the 'M' section in the 'All apps' area of the Start menu, you'll find **Mail** there.
- Open the Start menu, type the word **mail** and you'll see the Mail app among the search results – usually at the top.



Now that the Mail app has just started and its window has appeared on your screen, let's take a brief detour. Did you see the app's icon pinned to your taskbar, as mentioned above? If you didn't, it's a good idea to pin it there now: right-click it and choose **Pin to taskbar**. This not only gives you a quick one-click way to start the Mail app in future, but this icon will show you at a glance whether you have new, unread email messages, as I'll explain on page 16.



If this is the first time you've started the Mail app, the window will look similar to the screenshot on the next page. Do you see any email accounts listed below the words **Accounts you've added**? In my case, for instance, I sign into Windows 10 with an 'outlook.com' email address, and this has been added to the Mail app for me automatically ①.

*Your Outlook.com account may be listed already*

*Any other accounts to add?*

If you do see an account listed here, the question is: is this the email address you actively use? If you do, you're ready to start using Mail: click on **Go to inbox** ② and jump to page 7 to learn the basics.

If there's no email account listed here, or there is but it's not one you actively use, you'll need to add your email account to Mail, so click on **Add account** ③.



Perhaps this isn't the window you see? You may have started the Mail app before – and perhaps you've even been using it – but you haven't yet set it up to work with your preferred email account. If so, you've arrived at your inbox, with a list of folders at the left-hand side. Above these folders, click the word **Accounts**, and in the 'Manage accounts' panel that opens on the right, click on **Add account**.

*Add an email account to the Mail app*

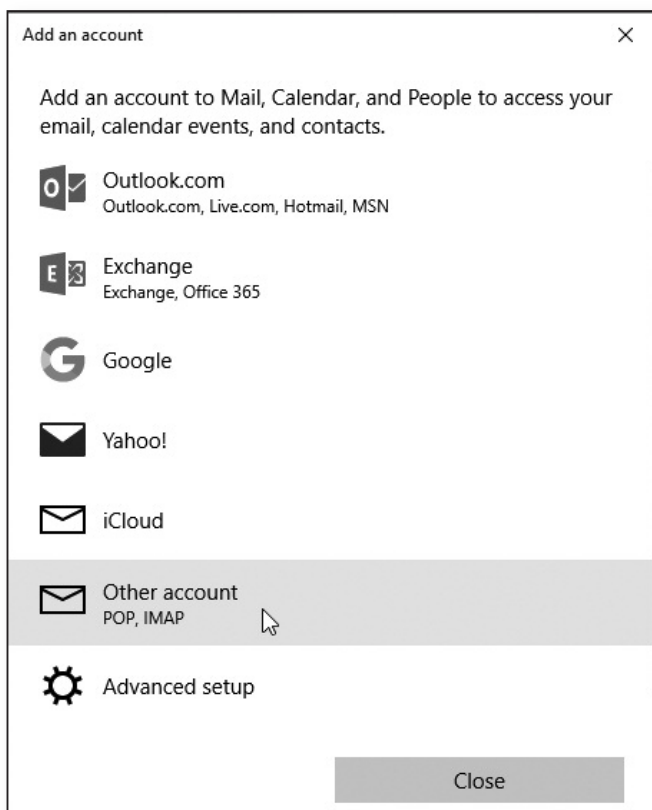
At this point, then, you've clicked on **Add account** somewhere in the Mail app and you're ready to get your email account set up. You'll see the panel pictured opposite, which lets you choose from various types of account (although you may have to scroll down a little way to see them all).

Now follow the appropriate details below according to the type of email account you want to set up:

### Add an email account from your ISP

As I mentioned earlier, you quite likely use an email address given to you by your Internet Service Provider. If so, that's a type of email account known technically as a 'POP' account or an 'IMAP' account. To set that up, click on **Other account** POP, IMAP in the panel that has just appeared:

*Set up your ISP's email account*



From here it should be easy as pie, with just three boxes to fill in. Type your email address into the first (making absolutely sure there are no typing mistakes), your own name in the second as you'd like it to appear in the email

*Enter your email address, name and email password*

*The app should find all the details it needs*

messages you send, and the password for this email account in the third. After a quick check that you really have typed everything correctly, click the **Sign in** button.

The Mail app now looks up all the required settings for your account, and assuming it can find them (which it almost certainly will) the panel will change to show the words **All finished!** and a note that your account was set up successfully. Click the **Done** button. If this takes you back to the window pictured on page 4, click on **Go to inbox**. You're now ready to start using your email account, and you can jump ahead to page 7 to learn more about using Mail.



What if the Mail app couldn't find the settings for your account? In that case, the panel will tell you so. The most likely reason is that you've misspelled the part of your email address following the @ sign, so check that and click the **Try again** button.

After you've clicked **Try again** a couple of times, still with no success, the panel will change to show additional boxes and options, and you'll have to enter the details yourself. You'll need to know the username for your email account, the names of the incoming and outgoing email servers, whether it's a 'POP3' or 'IMAP4' account, and a few other technical details. Your ISP quite likely gave you all these details when you signed up with them, but if they didn't, you should certainly expect to find them all (apart from your personal username) on their website.

*Add your webmail accounts to Mail*

### **Add an Outlook.com, Gmail or Yahoo! email account**

If you've created a free webmail account with one of these email providers, you probably have to visit a website and sign in whenever you want to check your messages or send an email. Adding that account to the Mail app will save you a lot of mucking about – not

least because you'll receive automatic notifications whenever new messages arrive for you.

In the panel that's just appeared, pictured on page 5, click on **Outlook.com**, **Google** (for Gmail) or **Yahoo!** as appropriate.

In each case, a panel will appear containing a sign-in page for the email service you've chosen. It's essentially the same sign-in page you've seen every time you've been to the Gmail, Outlook.com or Yahoo! website in the past, so it should hold few surprises: you'll type your email address and the password for this email account in the same way you always have. You'll probably then be asked to give Windows permission to access this email account, which of course you should.

The panel should change to show the words **All finished!** – click the **Done** button. If this takes you back to the window pictured on page 4, click on **Go to inbox**. You're now ready to start using your email account.

As I mentioned earlier, you can use Mail to manage more than one email account, so if you want to add others – now or later – you can do so. Click the large word **Accounts** at the left of the window, then **Add account** in the panel that appears on the right, and you'll see the 'Add an account' panel shown on page 5.

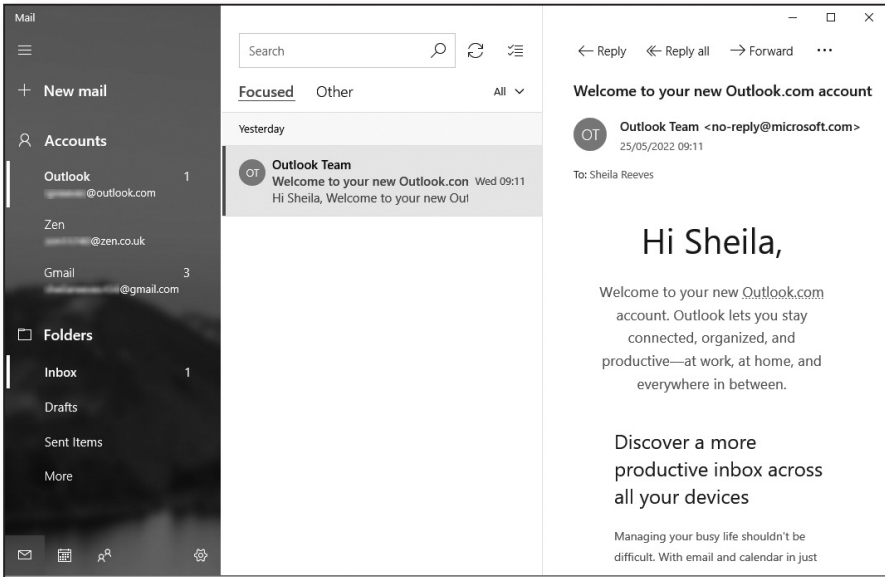


*Sign in and give your permission*

## The Basics: Read, Write, Send and Receive Messages

You've set up your account(s) by following the steps above and now you've arrived at the main Mail window, pictured on the next page. This is what you'll see straight away each time you open the Mail app in future. Let's start by taking a look around this window and seeing what's what.

*Explore the Mail app's window*



*Expand the left-hand panel*

First, does the panel at the far left look like the screenshot above? If it's just a narrow strip containing a few icons, click the 'hamburger button' (three horizontal lines) at the top to widen it.

*Each email account is listed...*

Directly below the large word **Accounts** in this left-hand panel is the list of accounts you've added to Mail. In my case, there are three accounts (named 'Outlook', 'Zen' and 'Gmail').

*... with its number of unread messages*

If you see a number to the right of an account's name, it's telling you how many new email messages are waiting to be read in that account. (In the screenshot above, my Outlook account has one new message and my Gmail account has three.)

*Click to switch between accounts*

To switch between these accounts, click the one you want to work with. A thick vertical line appears to its left to indicate that it's selected. (In the screenshot above, my 'Outlook' account is selected.)



If you have only one account set up in Mail, you don't have to bother with this: that single account will always be selected automatically as you don't have any others!



What do I mean by 'work with'? Well, when you click an account, three things happen:

- You'll see the list of folders belonging to this email account below the **Folders** heading. The folders vary from one type of account to another, but there will always be one named **Inbox**, which is where you'll find all your newly arrived messages (as well as any other messages you've received and haven't moved elsewhere). I'll explain more about folders on page 13.
- The **Inbox** folder for this account is selected, indicated by a thick vertical line to the left of that folder. In the middle panel of the window, you'll immediately see a list of all the messages in this folder, arranged into date order with the newest at the top.
- If you click the **New mail** button near the top of the left-hand panel, it creates a new email message to be sent from the account you've just selected.

*You'll see this account's email folders*

*The Inbox is selected*

*Write new email from this account*

That final point is an important one if you have two or more accounts set up in Mail. If I wanted to send a message from my 'Gmail' account, for instance, I must be sure that my Gmail account is selected (clicking it first if it isn't) before clicking the **New mail** button.



The panel at the right of the window is the 'reading pane'. Click any message in the central list of messages and you'll be able to read it in this panel. At the top of the reading pane are several useful buttons:

*Reading a message you've received*

**Reply:** compose a reply to the sender of the message you're reading.

**Reply all:** if the message you're reading was sent to several people, this composes a reply to the sender and to those people. (Otherwise it does the same as **Reply**.)

**Forward:** allows you to send a copy of this message to someone else, adding your own note and making any other changes you like to it along the way.

Beside these three buttons there's a ... button which displays a menu of other options for the message you're reading: to delete it, print it, move it to a different folder, switch to the next or previous message in the current folder, and more.



Until you've clicked a message to read, the reading pane just shows a picture. Rather surprisingly, you can choose any picture you like. Click the cog-shaped button at the bottom of the left-hand panel (which opens the app's Settings panel) and choose **Personalisation**. Below the **Background** heading you can either choose one of the built-in pictures or click **Browse** and pick one of your own.

*An unusual but helpful way to start!*

### **Get started: send yourself a message!**

It might seem a strange thing to do, but an ideal way to start is by sending yourself an email message. There are two reasons for that. First, since you've just set up your account in Mail, you can confirm that it's working properly – that it does successfully send messages and receive them. Second, as you've just started using Mail, you can gain a little early experience in using it.

Here's what to do:



1. If you have more than one account set up in Mail, click the account you want to use to send this message ①.
2. Now click on **New mail** ②.

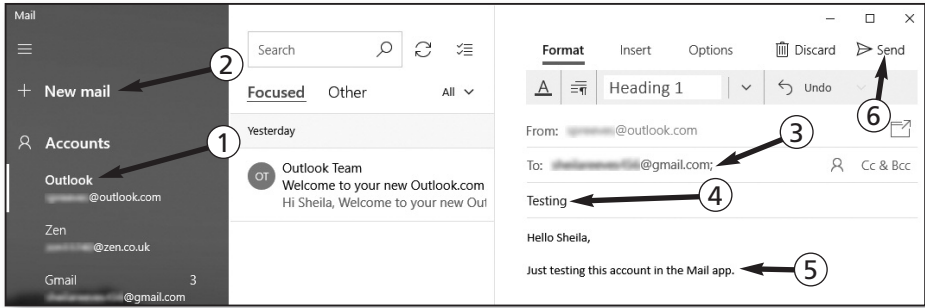
- 3. The reading pane at the right of the window becomes a 'writing pane' where you compose your message. Along **To:**, type your own email address ③.

*Send it to your own email address*

If you have just one account set up in Mail, type the email address of that account. But if you've set up two or more, you might like to send a message to one of the others: when that message arrives, you could then reply to it, thus testing that both accounts send and receive successfully.



- 4. Click in the **Subject** box just below and type a subject for the message ④.
- 5. In the large text area below that, type whatever you like as your message ⑤.
- 6. Click **Send** ⑥.



- 7. This writing pane disappears and your message is sent immediately.

Now wait and watch. Since email usually travels quickly, you should receive the message you've just sent to yourself within a minute or two. When it arrives, you'll briefly see a notification appear in the bottom-right corner of your screen showing the sender's name (your own name in this case, of course!), the subject line and the name of the email account that's received the message.

*Wait for the message to arrive*



This notification would appear whether or not the Mail app were currently open, so, even when you're busy doing something quite unrelated to email, you'll still see when new email arrives. And if you don't spot the notification during the few seconds it's shown, you'll find it in the Notification Centre (or Action Centre) panel by clicking the numbered icon at the extreme-right of your taskbar.



*Read (and answer)  
the new message*

Looking at the left-hand panel of the Mail app, you should see that there's now a **1** beside the name of the account to which you just sent the message, indicating that it's gained a new, unread message. (Or, if the account already had some unread messages, the number shown beside its name will have increased by one.)

Now you want to read that message and perhaps send a reply:

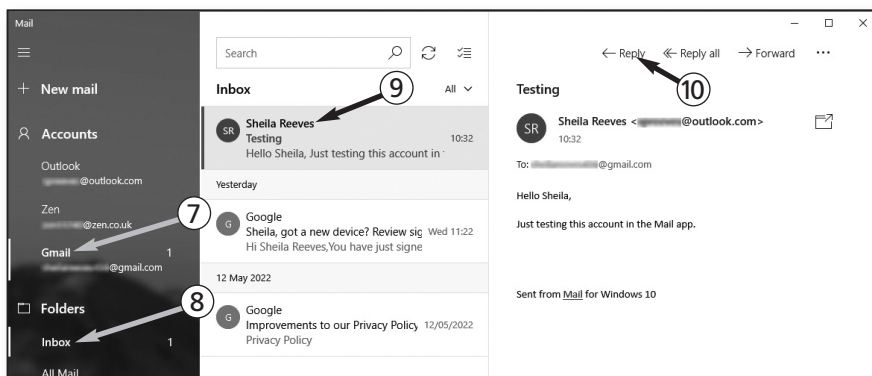


1. Click the account that's received the new message **⑦** if that account isn't currently selected.
2. Make sure you're seeing the contents of that account's inbox, where new messages arrive: if the **Inbox** folder isn't currently selected, click it **⑧**.
3. Your newly-arrived message should be first in the list **⑨** and you'll see the sender's name, the subject, the beginning of the message and the date and time it was sent. Click that message to read it.

*Click the message  
to read it*

- The reading pane appears on the right showing the message you've clicked.
- If you'd like to send a reply, click **Reply** ⑩ at the top of the reading pane. Once again this pane becomes a 'writing pane' where you can immediately type your reply and click **Send**.

*Compose and send a reply*



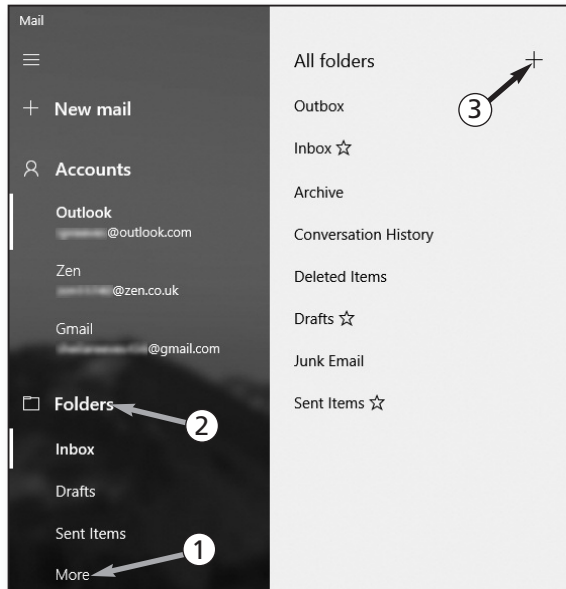
## Folders: Organising Your Messages

As I explained earlier, the folder named Inbox is the vital one, and whatever type of account you've set up in the Mail app, it will have an Inbox folder where new messages arrive. When you click the name of an account at the left, you'll certainly see Inbox below the word 'Folders', and you may well see one or two (or more) others as well.

*Every email account has an Inbox folder*

Below them you'll also see the word 'More', telling you that there are other folders you're not currently seeing. How many there are, and what they're called, varies from one type of account to another, but you can see them by clicking on **More** ① or by clicking the **Folders** heading ②: a panel slides out listing all the folders belonging to this account:

*Other folders vary between accounts*



*Place other folders in that left-hand panel*

In this panel, you'll see that some folders have a star beside them. These are your so-called 'favourite' folders – they're the ones that are shown in that left-hand panel. You can click any folder in this list to see any messages inside it, but if there's a folder you look in frequently, it pays to add it to the main panel where it's just one click away. To do that, right-click the required folder and choose **Add to Favourites**.



Two folders in particular that you might like among those 'favourites' are **Sent Items** (or **Sent Mail**) which is where you'll find copies of messages you've sent, and **Deleted Items** (or **Trash**) where you'll find messages you've deleted.

*You may be able to create new folders...*

For some types of account, you'll see a + sign ③ at the top of this list of all folders. This means you can create more folders of your own, and that's the ideal way to keep your email organised. Rather than gaining an ever-

growing clutter of incoming messages in your Inbox and a separate clutter of sent messages in Sent Items, create folders to put things where they belong.

For instance, you might create folders named Family, Work, Shopping, Bills and so on. To create a folder, click that + sign, type a name for the folder in the text box that appears, and press **Enter** to confirm it.

To move a message into a folder you've created, either right-click it in the middle pane of the window and choose **Move** or, if it's a message you're currently reading, click the ... button in the top-right of the reading pane and choose **Move**. In either case, you can then click the target folder in the panel that appears.

*... and organise your messages into them*

One major limitation of the Mail app is that you can't create your own folders for many types of account, forcing your messages to remain jumbled in your Inbox and Sent Items folders. If you can also manage your email account by signing into a web page, you could try creating new folders there: with luck, those same folders will then automatically appear in the Mail app after a short time. Otherwise, keep your fingers crossed that this flaw in the program is fixed soon!



### The Drafts folder – finish your message later

Another folder that's common to all types of account is one named **Drafts**. The moment you start writing a message – whether it's a new one or a reply – a copy is saved into this Drafts folder and continually updated as you type.

*A draft is saved automatically...*

This means that if you don't have time to finish writing a message, or you want to 'sleep on it' and read it through again before sending it, you can. Just close the Mail app, or switch to different accounts or different messages – or even start writing another message – this one is safe and sound in that Drafts folder.

*Keep an unfinished message without sending it*

*Reopen it at any time to check, edit and send*

When you're ready to finish that message – or at least, do some more work on it – find and click the **Drafts** folder (which, if it's not among your 'favourites' in the left panel, entails clicking on **More** or **Folders** first). You can then click your draft message to reopen it in the writing pane, work on it some more, and perhaps finally send it by clicking the **Send** button (at which point it's removed from the Drafts folder).

## Tips and Suggestions to Get the Best from Mail

By now you've picked up enough of the basics to use Mail for your day-to-day emailing, but let's finish with a collection of tips to take you a few steps further...

### Get rid of the unwanted 'signature'

*Do you really want to advertise the Mail app in every message?*

Every message you write ends with the line 'Sent from Mail for Windows'. You probably don't see any good reason to advertise for Microsoft, so let's get rid of that line! Click the cog icon at the bottom of the folders list to open Mail's Settings panel and click on **Signature**. Tick the box beside **Apply to all accounts**, click the switch beside **Use an email signature** to turn it off and then click **Save**.

### Easily see whether you have new messages

*See at a glance whether you have new email*

Windows is checking your account(s) for new email regularly, whether or not the Mail app is running. I noted on page 11 that a notification will appear whenever new messages arrive, and that notification will be added to the Notification Centre panel, but there are other ways to see whether any new mail is waiting for you. If you've pinned the Mail app to your taskbar, a superimposed number on its icon will tell you how many new, unread messages are



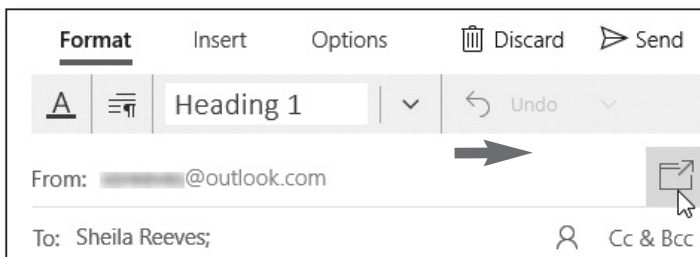


waiting for you, and in Windows 10 if you look at the Mail app's tile on the right of the Start menu, you'll see the same number in its bottom-right corner.

### Easier emailing: write messages in a separate window

I explained earlier than when you start composing a message, you do it in a writing pane that replaces the reading pane at the right of the window. That's fine if you're using Mail on a fairly large screen and you're able to make the window wide, but on a small screen the top of that writing pane looks something like this:

*Writing pane too narrow to use easily?*



The grey Ribbon toolbar near the top is squashed to the point that you have to click buttons to see the available options. That's not disastrous, but if you'd rather have a clearer view, click the button to its bottom-right. This opens your message in a new, wide window, giving the Ribbon space to spread itself out and letting you see all the available items in its **Format**, **Insert** and **Options** tabs.

*Compose messages in a separate, larger window*



If you close this window (by clicking the **x** in its top-right corner), your unsent message remains in your Drafts folder, as I explained on page 15. Otherwise, clicking **Send** closes the window automatically as the message is sent.

### Not keen on Outlook's 'Focused Inbox' feature?

*Outlook.com accounts split your inbox in two*

If you use an Outlook.com email account in Mail, you'll see that your Inbox is split into two sections (visible in the screenshot at the top of page 8): **Focused** and **Other**, and you switch between those sections by clicking those words. In a nutshell, Outlook tries to sort your email as it arrives, so that messages from 'important' senders go into 'Focused' and everything else goes into 'Other'.

*Not keen? You can turn this off*

You can right-click a message in either section and choose **Always move to Focused** (or **Other**) to take control over where particular senders' messages end up: the Mail app will remember your choice. But perhaps you'd rather just see your Inbox as a single list, as you do for other types of email account? If so, click the **Settings** (cog-shaped) icon at the bottom-left, choose **Focused inbox** and then click the obvious switch to turn it to **Off**.

### Waiting for a message that hasn't arrived yet?

Although the Mail app checks for new email automatically, there may be times when you're expecting a message and you really don't want to wait around for it any longer than you have to.

*Check for new messages on a particular account*

In that case, you can force the app to check a particular email account whenever you like. Switch to that account at the left of the window and, if necessary, click its **Inbox** folder to ensure that folder is selected. Then, beside the search box at the top of the message list, click the **Sync this view** button: the app will check for new messages and add any new arrivals to your Inbox.

