

Chapter 2

Taming the Email Beast

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Taking a tour of Gmail
 - » Shipping and receiving: Sending and getting messages
 - » Replying to and forwarding messages
 - » Handling file attachments (carefully!)
 - » Helpful tips and techniques for managing all that email
-

To the world's technology nerds, a *killer app* is a software application that is so useful, so popular, or so essential to its underlying technology that the app is seen as indispensable to that technology. Email has been called the killer app of the Internet, and it certainly deserves that title. Yes, instant messaging is ubiquitous these days; social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram get a lot of press; and faddish programs such as TikTok come and go. However, while not everyone uses these services, it's safe to say that almost everyone uses email. You probably use email all day, particularly during those few hours each day you describe as “work,” so learning a few useful and efficient email techniques can make your day a bit easier and save you time for more important pursuits.

The G Suite email app is called Gmail, and in this chapter you learn the basics of sending and receiving messages with Gmail, and then you delve a bit deeper to discover some Gmail gems that will kick your email know-how into a higher gear.

Rhymes with Email: Getting to Know Gmail

The good news about Gmail is that when it comes to the basic email operations — I'm talking sending and receiving messages, replying to messages, dealing with attached files, keeping your messages organized — the program is a beacon of simplicity in a world burdened by overly complex software. This is music to the ears for those of us (and that would be all of us) who wrestle with email all day long.

The bad news about Gmail is, well, I can't think of any! Put simply, Gmail does the job it was designed to do, which goes a long way toward explaining why Gmail boasts about 1.5 billion (yep, that's right: *billion*) active users.

I'm assuming you're new to Gmail, so I start by taking you on a guided tour of the app so that you know where all the major (and a few minor) landmarks are. If you've used Gmail for a while, you might want to take the tour anyway, because you never know what useful features you might have missed.

Touring the Gmail app

To get things started with the Gmail app, point your favorite web browser to mail.google.com and then sign in, if asked. The Gmail app that shows up looks fairly plain, but quite a few knickknacks are scattered around the screen. Let's take a look:

- » **Main menu:** This is the sidebar on the left, and it consists of the following elements:
 - *Label list:* When you work in Gmail, your messages aren't stored in folders the way they are in most other email apps. Instead, Gmail uses labels to organize your messages, and all your labels appear on the Main menu's label list. When you click a label on this list, you see all your messages that have that label applied. For example, when a new message arrives, Gmail automatically applies the Inbox label to it, so to see all your new messages, you click the Inbox label.



REMEMBER Why use labels instead of good old-fashioned folders? Because folders are storage areas, which means a message can reside in only one place at a time. However, you can slap as many labels on a message as you like. If a new message comes in and you give it the Starred label, that message is available to you in both the Inbox label and the Starred label. If the benefit of this strategy isn't clear right now, don't worry: I talk much more about labels later in this chapter.

- *Profile picture*: This is the image that others see when you interact with them in the G Suite apps. I talk a bit later about how to change this picture.
 - *Contacts*: This is the contacts list from the Hangouts app.
 - *Conversations*: You can see your recent chat conversations conducted in the Hangouts app.
 - *Phone calls*: Make a phone call.
- » **Main menu toggle**: Click this icon to narrow the main menu to show only icons. This gives you a bit more horizontal space for Gmail. Click the icon again to expand the main menu.
 - » **Select**: You can select some or all of the messages in the current label.
 - » **Refresh**: Click to check for new messages.
 - » **Search mail**: Enter text here to locate messages.
 - » **Google apps**: Clicking the grid icon displays the icons for all Google apps.
 - » **Google account**: Get access to your Google account.
 - » **Side panel**: This sidebar, which is on the right, consists of the following elements:
 - *Calendar*: Opens a pane for quick access to Google Calendar.

- *Keep*: Enables you to write a quick note to store in the Keep app.
 - *Tasks*: Enables you to create a quick task to store in the Tasks app.
- » **Hide side panel:** Click this arrow to collapse the side panel and gain a little extra horizontal legroom. Click the arrow again to redisplay the side panel.

[Figure 2-1](#) points out the features listed above.

Touring the Gmail Inbox

Now I want to zoom in a bit and focus on just the inbox portion of the Gmail screen. I talk about many of the inbox features later in this chapter, so I'll just hit a few highlights here (check out [Figure 2-2](#), which offers handy pointers to the features in the following list):

- » **Message actions:** These icons represent actions you can take on the selected message, such as moving the message to another label or deleting the message.
- » **More:** Click this icon to see even more message actions.
- » **Message navigation:** If you have more than one screenful of messages in the current label, you can click these arrows to navigate the messages one screenful at a time.
- » **Settings menu:** Gain access to all the Gmail settings.



FIGURE 2-1: Gmail, your G Suite email home.



FIGURE 2-2: The Gmail inbox.

Showing your good side: Adding a profile photo

When you send an email to another Gmail user, participate in a chat or a meeting, collaborate on a document or spreadsheet, or do any number of other G Suite activities, your presence in those activities is indicated by your G Suite profile photo. For a new G Suite account, that photo is a generic silhouette of a perfectly round head floating above the top third or so of what appears to be a perfectly round torso. (Refer to [Figure 2-1](#).) It's perfectly bland, in other words. Believe me, you do *not* want “circle person” to represent you to your colleagues, friends, and family.

Fortunately, the road to a flattering profile photo consists of just the following steps:

1. **On the Gmail main menu, click the default profile picture (pointed out earlier, in [Figure 2-1](#)).**

The Select Profile Photo window appears.

2. **Make sure the Upload Photos tab is selected.**

If you've previously uploaded photos to use as your profile, they show up on the Your Photos tab, so feel free to click that tab if you want to reuse a previous photo.

If you want to take a fresh photo using your PC's camera, click the Web Camera tab.



REMEMBER When you display the Web Camera tab, chances are you'll see an error message that says, "Adobe Flash Player is blocked." Bummer. If you really want to use the camera, open your web browser's settings and find the option that enables Flash. (In Chrome, click Settings, See all settings, click Privacy and Security, click Site Settings, click Flash, and then click the Block Sites from Running Flash switch.) Follow Steps 1 and 2 and, when your browser asks whether it can run Flash, click Allow.

3. Select the photo you want to use for your profile.

Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to locate the photo in File Explorer (Windows) or Finder (Mac), click and drag the photo, and then drop it on the "Drag a profile photo here" message.

Otherwise, click Select a Photo from Your Computer, choose the image you want to use, and then click Open.

4. Click Set as Profile Photo.

Gmail uploads the image and uses it as your profile pic across all the G Suite apps. Looking good!

The Outbox: Sending an Email Message

Okay, enough lollygagging. It's time to get to work and learn how to foist your e-prose on unsuspecting colleagues, friends, family, and former "Brady Bunch" cast members. This section shows you the basic technique to use and then gets a bit fancier in discussing the contacts list, attachments, and other snippets of Gmail sending lore.

The basics: Composing and sending a message

Without further ado (not that there's been much ado to this point, mind you), here are the basic steps to follow to fire off an email message to some lucky recipient:

1. **On Gmail's main menu, click Compose.**

You end up with the New Message window onscreen, as shown in [Figure 2-3](#).

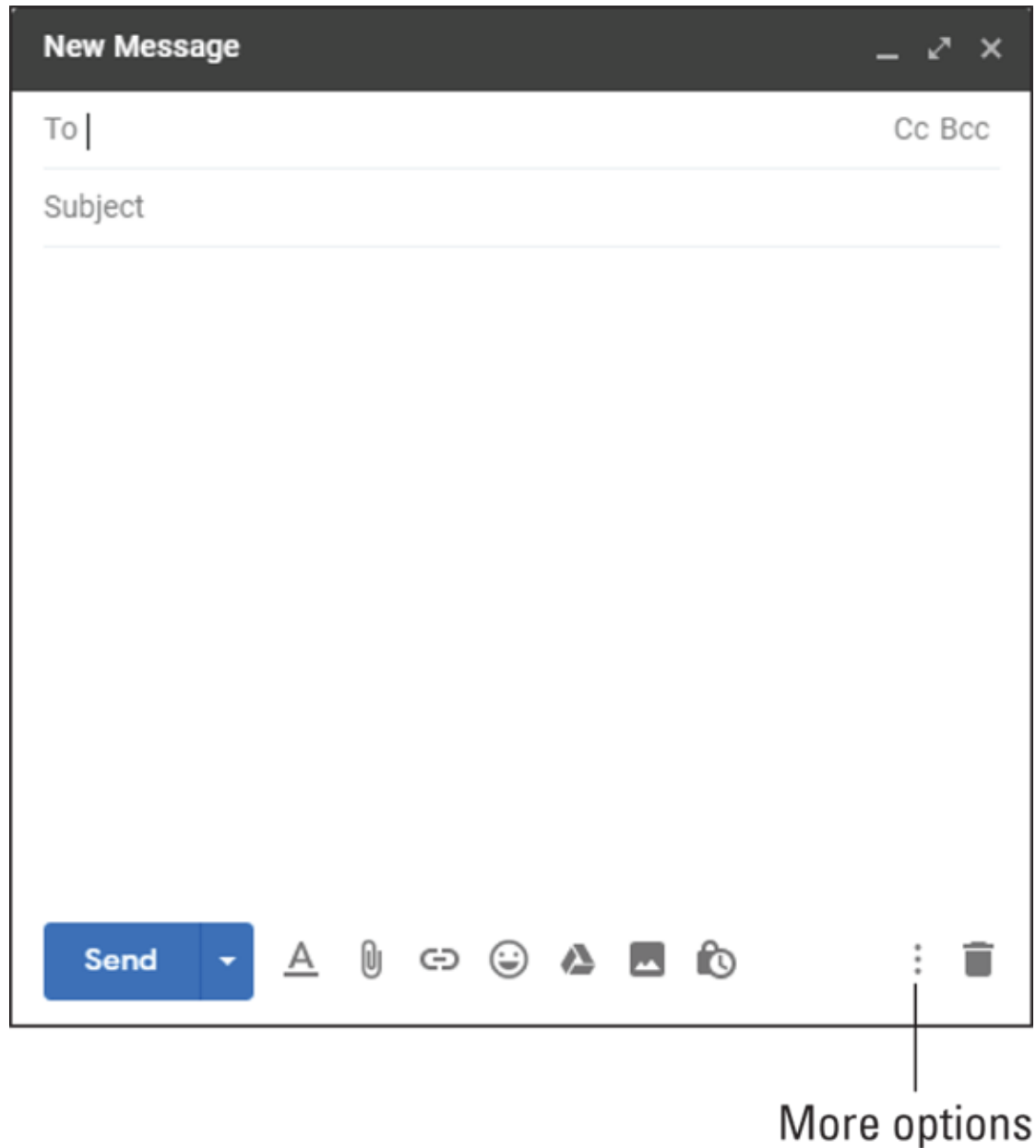


FIGURE 2-3: You cobble together an email message in the New Message window.

2. **In the To text box, type the email address of the recipient.**

It's perfectly acceptable to enter multiple addresses in this text box. After each address, press Enter. (For variety, you can also press Tab

or type a semicolon [;] or a comma [,].)

What if you make a mistake in the address? Don't sweat it: Double-click the address to open it for editing, fix the error, and then press Enter.

What if you want to remove an address? Again, easy money: Click the X that appears to the right of the address.

- 3. The address you put in the To box is the main recipient of the message. However, it's common to shoot off a copy of the message to a secondary recipient. To do that, click Cc (short for courtesy copy) and then enter the email address in the Cc text box that shows up. (Again, you can enter multiple addresses, if you're so inclined.)**

You might also want to send the message to someone as a *blind courtesy copy* (Bcc), which does in fact send a copy of the message to that person but also ensures that none of the other recipients sees that person's address anywhere. Click BCC and type the address in the Bcc text box.



REMEMBER It seems awfully stealthy to send a Bcc to someone, so when would you ever do such a thing? The most common reason is that you want that person to see the contents of your message, but you don't want to burden that person with the subsequent conversation. That is, if one of your To or Cc recipients clicks Reply All (which I talk about later in this chapter), that reply doesn't go to anyone in the Bcc field.

- 4. Use the Subject line to enter a subject for the message.**

Now, don't rush things here. The subject acts as a kind of title for your message. It's the first thing the recipient sees, so it should accurately reflect the content of your message, but it shouldn't be too long. Think pithy.

- 5. Use the large, empty area below the Subject line to type the message text (also known in Nerdsville as the *message body*).**

6. **Click the Formatting Options icon to display the impressive collection of commands shown in [Figure 2-4](#).**

Use these icons and commands to change the font, the type size, and the type style. You can also click More Formatting Options to format paragraphs, add a bulleted or numbered list, and more.



TIP

Check your spelling before sending your message to the recipient. It just takes a sec, and if the spell checker finds an error or two, you'll save yourself a bit of embarrassment. To run the spell checker, click More Options (pointed out earlier, in [Figure 2-3](#)) and then click Check Spelling.

7. **When your message is fit for human consumption, click Send.**



REMEMBER

After your message is outward-bound, Gmail also is kind enough to save a copy of it in the Sent label. This is handy because it gives you a record of all the missives you launch into cyberspace.

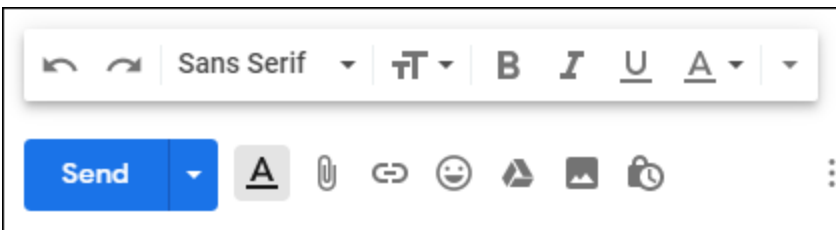


FIGURE 2-4: Click Formatting Options to spruce up your message text.

Easier addressing: Using the Contacts app

If you find yourself with a bunch of recipients to whom you send stuff regularly (and it's a rare emailer who doesn't), you soon grow tired of entering their addresses by hand. The solution is to toss those regulars into the Contacts app. That way, you can fire them into the To or CC (or even BCC) lines with just a few mouse clicks.

I cover how to add folks to your Contacts app in just the right amount of detail in [Chapter 4](#). So, assuming that you have your email regulars safely stowed in Contacts, follow these steps to send one or more of them a message:

1. On Gmail's main menu, click Compose.

2. In the New Message window, click To.

Gmail displays the Select Contacts window.

3. Select the check box to the left of the contact's name.

Note that you see this check box only when you hover the mouse pointer over the contact.

4. Repeat Step 3 as required.

5. Click Insert.

6. Adding contacts to the CC and BCC fields is similar:

- *CC field:* Click CC to display the field, and then click CC to the left of the field to display the Select Contacts window. Select the check box beside each contact you want to add to the CC field, and then click Insert.
- *BCC field:* Click BCC to display the field, and then click BCC to the left of the field to display the Select Contacts window. Select the check box beside each contact you want to add to the BCC field, and then click Insert.

7. Fill in the rest of the message and then click Send.

Inserting attachments and other hangers-on

Most of your messages will be text-only creations (perhaps with a bit of formatting tossed in to keep things interesting). However, it's also possible to send entire files along for the ride. Such files are called, naturally enough, *attachments*. They're very common in the business world, and it's useful to know how they work. Here goes:

1. On Gmail's main menu, click Compose.

2. **Click the Attach Files icon (see [Figure 2-5](#)).**

The Open dialog box rears its head.

3. **Find the file you want to attach and then select it.**

4. **Click Open.**

Gmail returns you to the New Message window, where you see a new box near the bottom that includes the name and size of the file.

Why does Gmail show you the file size? It's a reminder not to bolt an attachment or six onto every message you send. Adding attachments can greatly increase the size of your message, so it may take the recipient quite a while to download your message — which won't be appreciated, I can tell you. Some email services put an upper limit on the size of a message, so it's also possible that your recipient may never see your note. Use common sense: Attach files only when it's necessary, and avoid sending humongous files.



REMEMBER The maximum message size you can send with Gmail is 25MB. The maximum message size you can receive with Gmail is 50MB.

5. **Fill in the rest of the message and then click Send.**

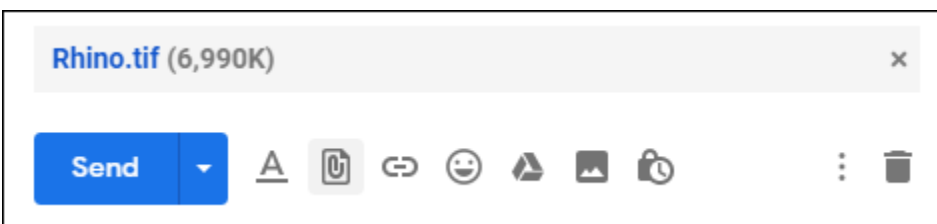


FIGURE 2-5: A file, attached to a message.

Creating a signature

In email lingo, a *signature* is a chunk of text that appears at the bottom of all your messages. Most people use their signature to give contact information, and you often see sigs (that's the hip short form) adorned with witty quotations or sayings.

Here are the steps you need to plow through to create a signature:

1. **Choose Settings ⇒ See all settings.**

Gmail opens the Settings page with the General tab displayed.

2. **Scroll way down until you come to the Signature setting.**

3. **Click Create New.**

The Name New Signature dialog box appears.

4. **Enter the name you want to identify your signature and then click Create.**

5. **Use the large text box to compose the signature.**

[Figure 2-6](#) shows an example.

Feel free to enhance your signature with any of the formatting options that appear just below the text box.

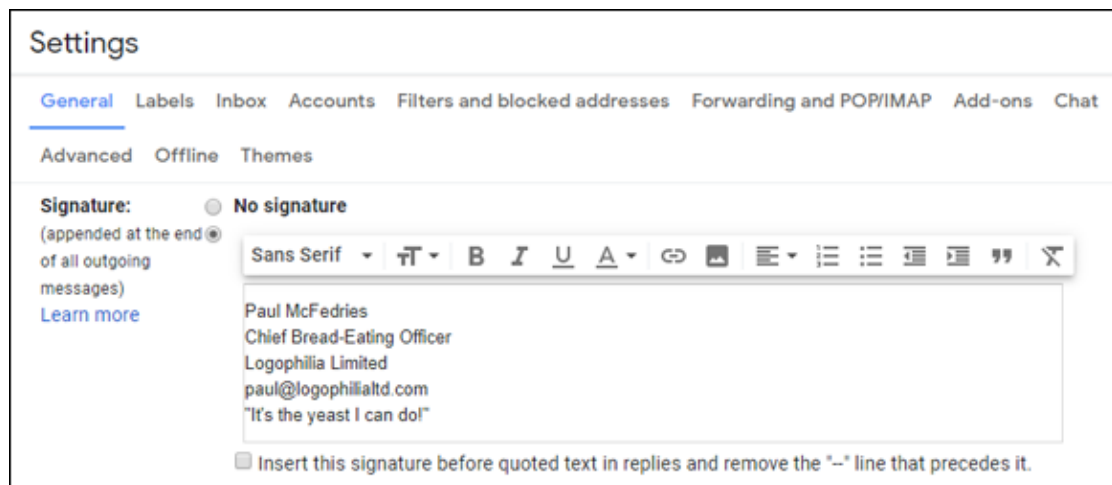


FIGURE 2-6: Use the Signature setting to create a signature that says “you.”

6. **If you want Gmail to add a signature whenever you create a new email message, use the For New Emails Use list to select the signature.**

7. **If you want Gmail to tack on the signature whenever you reply to a message or forward a message to someone, use the On Reply/Forward Use list to select the signature.**

8. **When you're done, scroll down to the very bottom of the Settings page and click Save Changes.**

Scheduling a send

When you compose an email and click Send, Gmail dutifully ships out your message right away. However, there might be times when you want your email delayed until a certain time or even a certain day. For example, you might want a newsletter email to go out at midnight tonight. Similarly, you might prefer that a message to your team be delivered first thing Monday morning.

Whatever the reason for the delay, you can set up a message to be sent later, by following these steps:

1. **Create, address, and write your email in the usual way.**
2. **Click More Send Options.**

More Send Options is the downward-pointing arrow to the right of the Send button.

3. **Click Schedule Send.**

Gmail offers up the Schedule Send dialog box, which looks suspiciously like the one shown in [Figure 2-7](#).

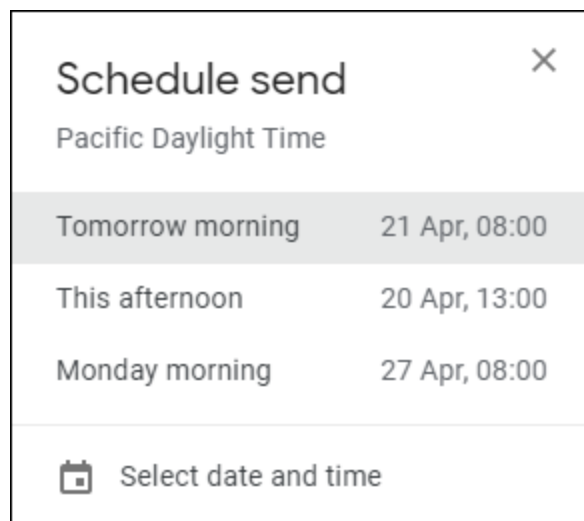


FIGURE 2-7: Use the Schedule Send dialog box to tell Gmail when you want it to send your message.

4. **If one of the three offered dates and times works for you, go ahead and click it and then ignore the rest of these steps. Otherwise, click Select Date and Time.**

Gmail opens the Select Date and Time dialog box, which offers a calendar and a time text box.

5. **Use the calendar to select the date on which you want your message fired off.**
6. **Use the text box to enter the time you want to send the message.**
7. **Click Schedule Send.**

Gmail makes a note to send your message on the date and time you specified.



REMEMBER Your scheduled messages get parked in the Scheduled label until it's time for them to hit the road.



TIP What happens if you have a message scheduled to be sent later, but you realize you'd rather send it now? No problem: Gmail is happy to cancel the schedule and send your message right away. To make this happen, choose Scheduled on Gmail's main menu, click the message, and then click Cancel Send. Gmail opens the message in a separate window, and you can then click Send to fire the message into the ether right away.

Undoing a send

It's a rare emailer who hasn't experienced "post-Send" regret, which is the sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that comes when you realize you've just posted a long lament about the sad state of your love life to the entire company.

The Gmail programmers must have experienced that regret a time or two themselves because they did something about it: They created the Undo

command. After you click Send, Gmail displays the Message Sent pop-up, shown in [Figure 2-8](#), for a few seconds. Crucially for those of us with overly sensitive Send trigger fingers, that pop-up also includes an Undo command. Click Undo and Gmail plucks your message out of the outbox and opens it again so that you can make whatever changes you need (or toss the message in the trash). Whew!

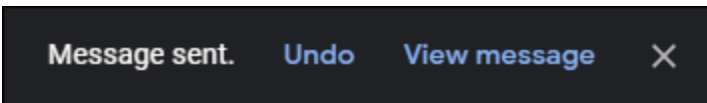


FIGURE 2-8: Right after you send a message, you can change your mind by clicking Undo.

By default, Gmail displays the Message Sent pop-up (and therefore the Undo command) for only five seconds. If you'd like a bit more time, follow these steps:

1. **Choose Settings ⇒ See all settings.**
Gmail opens the Settings page with the General tab displayed.
2. **For the Undo Send setting, use the Send Cancellation Period: X Seconds drop-down list to set the number of seconds you want.**
You can choose 5, 10, 20, or 30 seconds.
3. **Scroll down to the bottom of the Settings page and click Save Changes.**

The Inbox: Handling Incoming Messages

Some people like to think of email as a return to the days of *belles lettres* and *billets-doux*. (These people tend to be a bit pretentious.) Yes, it's true that email has people writing again, but this isn't like the letter-writing of old. The major difference is that the turnaround time for email is usually much quicker. Rather than wait weeks or even months to receive a return letter, a return email might take as little as a few minutes or a few hours. So, if you send a message with a question or comment, chances are that

you'll receive a reply before too long. This section shows you what to do with those messages after they arrive.

Refreshing your messages

One of Gmail's handiest features is that whenever it receives a message, it automatically adds it to your inbox. Nice! However, Gmail sometimes doesn't add a new message to the inbox immediately. It will get there soon enough, but if you're waiting impatiently for a particular message to arrive, you can often speed things up a bit by clicking the Refresh icon (pointed out earlier, in [Figure 2-1](#)).

Reading your messages

[Figure 2-9](#) shows the Inbox label with a few messages. The first thing to notice is that Gmail uses a bold font for all messages you haven't read yet. For each message, you also see the name of the sender, the Subject line and the first few words of the body (separated by a dash), and the delivery time (if it was delivered today) or date (if it was delivered before today).

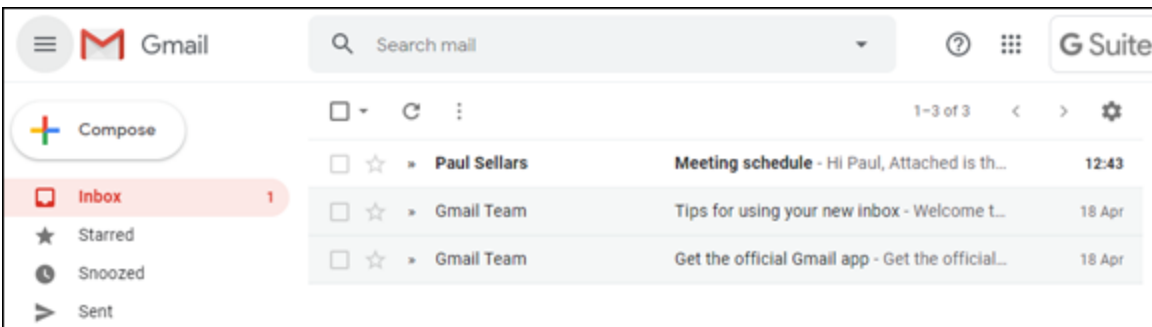


FIGURE 2-9: The inbox with a few messages received.

To read a message, click it. Gmail opens the message and displays its text, as shown in [Figure 2-10](#). To navigate your messages, use the following techniques (all shown in [Figure 2-10](#)):

- » To display the next oldest message, click Older.
- » To display the next newer message, click Newer.
- » To return to the inbox, click Back to Inbox.

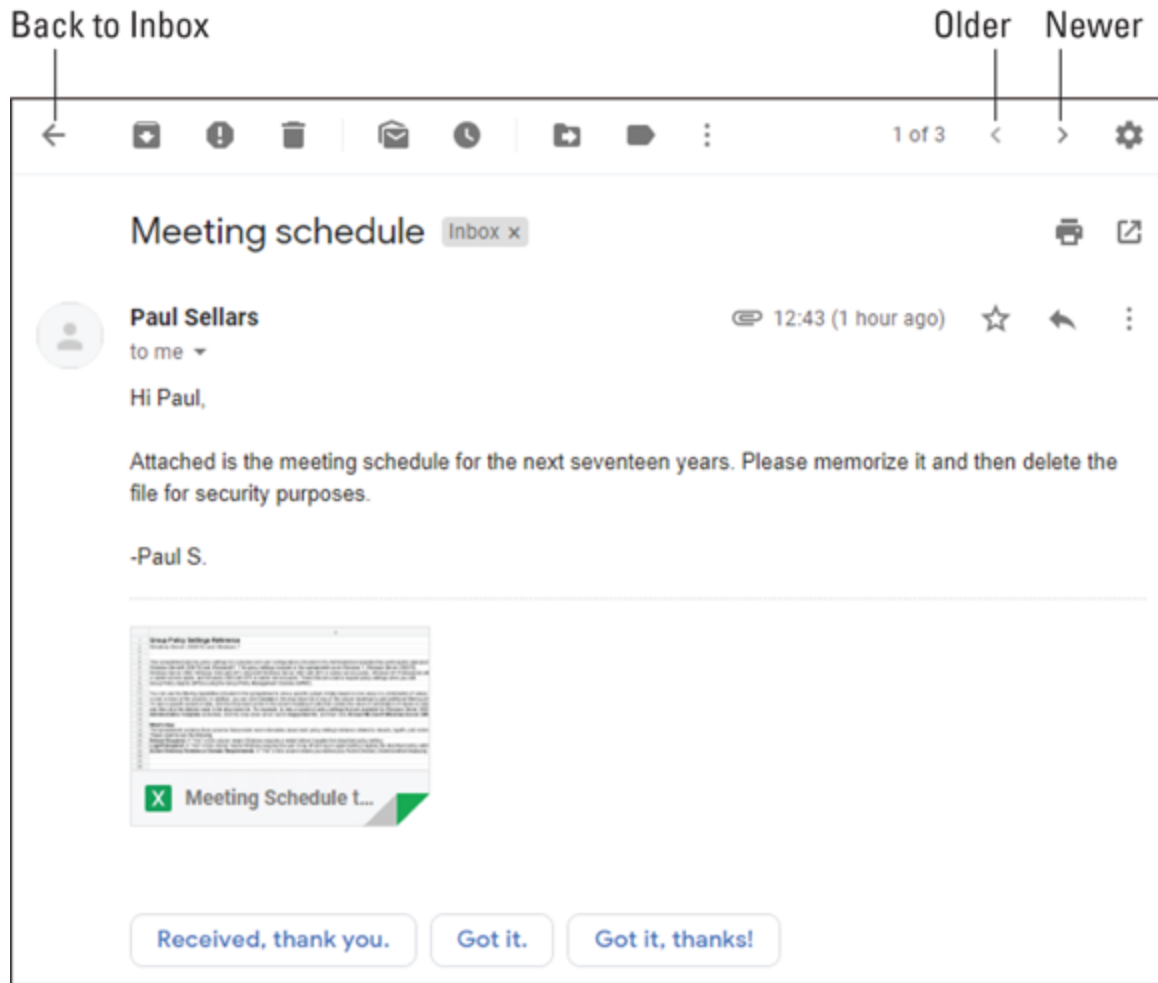


FIGURE 2-10: Click a message to open it and see what it says.

Easier reading with the Reading pane

Reading messages isn't hard, but it does involve a few more clicks than you might like. To fix that, you can sit Gmail down and ask it to display the reading pane, which is a separate area displayed alongside the inbox. When you select a message, Gmail displays the message text in the reading pane. One-click reading!

You have two choices when it comes to the position of the reading pane:

- » **To the right of the inbox:** This option splits the inbox area vertically so that you end up with the inbox on the left and the reading pane on the right. This gives you the most vertical reading space, so it's best if you tend to get long messages.

- » **Below the inbox:** This option splits the inbox area horizontally so that you end up with the inbox on the top and the reading pane on the bottom. This gives you the most horizontal inbox space, which makes it easier to navigate your messages.

Follow these steps to start using the reading pane:

1. **Choose Settings ⇒ See all settings.**

Gmail opens the Settings page with the General tab displayed.

2. **Click the Inbox tab.**

3. **For the Reading Pane setting, select the Enable Reading Pane check box.**

4. **For the Reading Pane Position setting, click the radio button you prefer: Right of Inbox or Below Inbox.**

You also see a third option here: No Split. This tells Gmail to go ahead and activate the reading pane, but not to show it right away.

You can then display the reading pane whenever you need it by using the Toggle Split Pane Mode list, pointed out in [Figure 2-11](#).

5. **Scroll to the bottom of the inbox page and click Save Changes.**

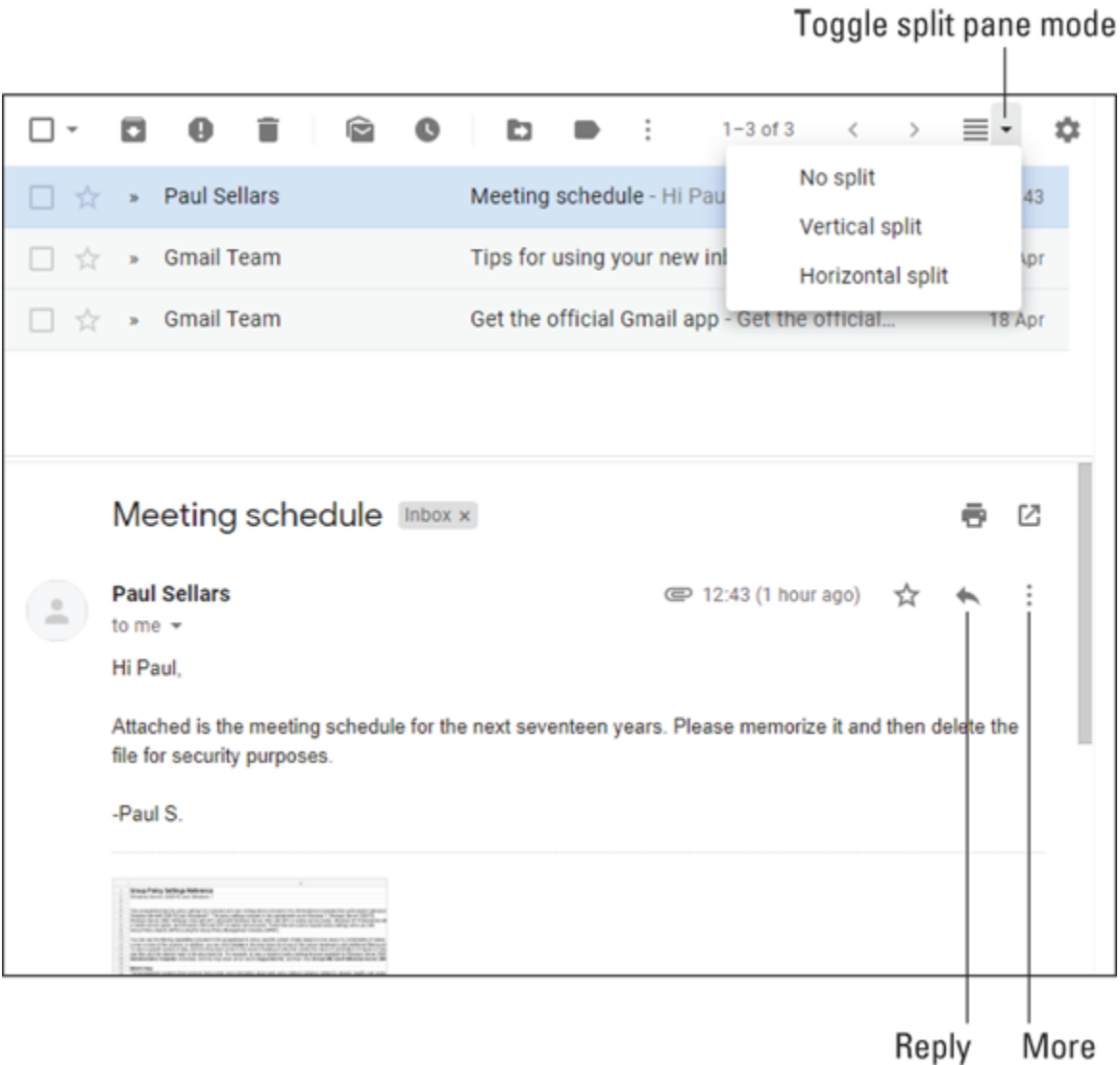


FIGURE 2-11: The reading pane, positioned below the inbox message list.

[Figure 2-11](#) shows the inbox with the reading pane lurking below the message list, dutifully displaying the text of the selected message. Note, too, the new Toggle Split Pane Mode list, which you can use to adjust the reading pane position to the right of the inbox (Vertical Split), below the inbox (Horizontal Split), or hidden (No Split).

Attending to attachments

If you receive a message that has one or more files tied to it, when you open that message (either directly or in the reading pane), you see a thumbnail version of each attached file. Gmail gives you quite a few ways to handle any attachments in the current message:

- » **View the file.** If you just want to see what's in the file, you can open the file for viewing by clicking the file thumbnail. Gmail opens the file and displays a toolbar similar to the one shown in [Figure 2-12](#). With this toolbar, you can open the file in a compatible G Suite app (such as Sheets), add the file to My Drive, print the file, or download the file.
- » **Download the file.** Hover the mouse pointer over the file thumbnail and then click Download. (See [Figure 2-13](#).) Alternatively, click the thumbnail to open the file for viewing and then click Download. (Refer to [Figure 2-12](#).)



WARNING Although Gmail makes it easy to deal with attachments, you should never just blithely open an attached file that you've downloaded, because you might end up infecting your computer with a virus or another type of malware. Be sure to use your security software (such as Windows Defender) to scan the file for malware before opening it.

- » **Save the file to your Google Drive.** Hover the mouse pointer over the file thumbnail and then click Add to Drive. (Refer to [Figure 2-13](#)). Alternatively, click the thumbnail to open the file for viewing and then click Add to My Drive. (Refer to [Figure 2-12](#).)
- » **Open the file for editing.** Hover the mouse pointer over the file thumbnail and then click Edit with *App* (refer to [Figure 2-13](#)), where *App* is a compatible G Suite app. Alternatively, click the thumbnail to open the file for viewing and then click Open with *App*. (Refer to [Figure 2-12](#).)



FIGURE 2-12: You see a toolbar similar to this one when you view an attached file.

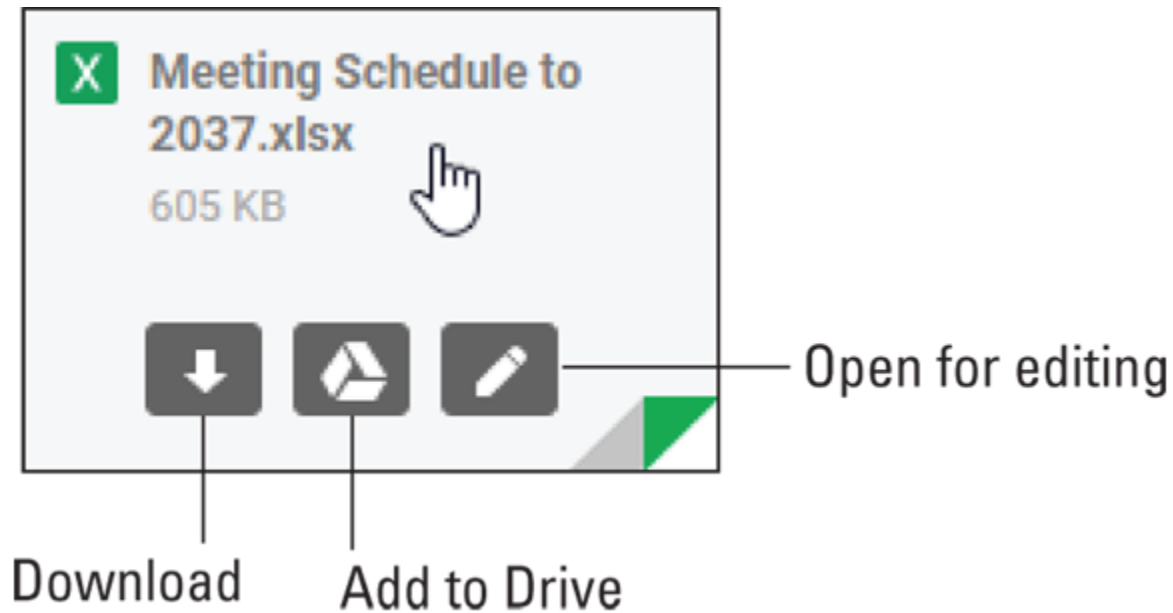


FIGURE 2-13: Hover the mouse pointer over the thumbnail to see the icons shown here.

Responding to a message

If you receive a message that asks a question, solicits an opinion, or otherwise requires feedback from you, you can send a response. Open the message and then run one of the following commands:

- » **Reply:** Click this command (refer to [Figure 2-11](#)) to send a response back to the sender of the message. Mail automatically addresses the message to the sender, includes the original subject line preceded by *Re: (regarding)*, and adds the original message's text.



REMEMBER Gmail also usually displays several so-called Smart Replies below the message. For example, if you receive an attached file, you might see a Smart Reply such as “Received — thank you” or “Got it.” Click a Smart Reply button to create a reply that includes the Smart Reply text. To turn off Smart Replies, click Settings, See all settings, click the Smart Reply Off radio button, and then click Save Changes.

- » **Reply All:** If the note was foisted on several people, choose this command to send your response to everyone who received the

original (except anyone who was included in the Bcc field). Mail automatically addresses the message to the sender and all recipients of the original message, includes the original subject line preceded by *Re:*, and adds the original message's text.



WARNING When I say “all recipients,” I mean all recipients, so be extra careful when running the Reply All command. Why? Because the “all” you're dealing with could be your team, your department, or even your entire organization, so a complaint about the “jerks over in Marketing” that gets sent accidentally to all recipients might result in tears later on.

- » **Forward:** Choose this command to have someone else take a gander at the message you received. Mail automatically includes the original subject line preceded by *Fwd:* and adds the original message's text. Note that you need to supply the recipient's address.



TIP A forwarded message contains the original message text, which is preceded by an “Original Message” header and some of the message particulars (who sent it, when they sent it, and so on). If you want your recipient to see the message exactly as you received it, close the original message (if it's open), select the message (by selecting its check box), click More (the three-vertical-dots thing that appears just above the message list), and then click Forward as Attachment.

Add your own text to the message and then click Send to fire off the response.

Creating a task from a message

Many email messages (and, on bad days, *way* too many email messages) require you to perform some action. It could be making a phone call, completing a report, sending a file, or donating to yet another coworker's

walkathon for *Insert Name of Obscure Disease Here*. You could leave such messages in your Inbox and hope you get around to them one day, or you can be more proactive and create a task from each message. That way, you can use the Tasks app to keep track of what you need to get done.

Here are the steps to tackle to create a task from a Gmail message:

1. **Open or select the message you want to work with.**
2. **Click the Add to Tasks icon, pointed out earlier in [Figure 2-11](#).**

Gmail opens the Tasks pane and adds a new task that includes a link to the email message.

Setting up a vacation responder

Remember the days when you'd leave on vacation for a couple of weeks and leave your work behind? No, I don't either! These days, we live in a cruel world where people send you a message and expect an instant reply. And it's a sure sign of pending cultural collapse that you're expected to reply even when you're on vacation. Boo!

Okay, fine. Maybe you do have to reply while you're out of the office, but there's no rule (yet) that says you have to reply immediately. Unfortunately, your correspondents might not know you're away, so to forestall an angry “Why didn't you answer my message in less than ten seconds?” follow-up, set up a vacation responder. A *vacation responder* — also known in the G Suite world as an *out-of-office autoreply* — is an automatic reply that gets fired off to everyone who has the temerity to send you a message while you're trying to have a relaxing vacation with your family.



REMEMBER “Wait a minute,” I hear you say. “What if someone doesn't get the hint and keeps sending me messages? Will they end up with dozens of these automatic replies?” Nope. Gmail is smart enough to

recognize when someone sends multiple messages your way and only ships out an autoreply every four days.

Here are the steps to plow through to create a vacation responder:

1. Choose Settings ⇒ See all settings.

Gmail opens the Settings page with the General tab displayed.

2. Scroll down until you come to the Out-of-Office AutoReply setting, which is near the bottom of the page.

3. Click the Out of Office AutoReply On radio button.

4. Use the First Day date picker to select the day you want to start sending the automatic replies.

5. (Optional) Select the Last Day check box and use the date picker to select the day you want to stop sending the automatic replies.

If you don't choose the Last Day option, you'll need to remember to turn off the automatic replies manually by clicking the Out of Office AutoReply Off radio button.

6. Use the Subject text box to enter a Subject line for your automatic replies.

7. Use the large text box to compose the reply.

[Figure 2-14](#) shows an example.

Feel free to spruce up your reply text with any of the formatting options that loom just above the text box.

Out-of-Office AutoReply: (sends an automated reply to incoming messages. If a contact sends you several messages, this automated reply will be sent at most once every 4 days) [Learn more](#)

Out of Office AutoReply off

Out of Office AutoReply on

First day: 18 August 2020 **Last day:** 25 August 2020

Subject: In a galaxy far, far away

Message:

Sans Serif | Text color | Bold | Italic | Underline | Link | Image | Bulleted list | Numbered list | Indented list | Quote | Undo

« Plain Text

Hi,
Thanks for your email. Unfortunately, I'm away from my desk until August 25, so I won't be able to respond to your message until then. I hope that's okay.
~Paul

Only send a response to people in my Contacts

Only send a response to people in Logophilia Limited

Save Changes Cancel

FIGURE 2-14: Use the Out-of-Office AutoReply setting to create a vacation responder.

8. **If you want Gmail to respond only to messages from folks in your contacts list, select the Only Send a Response to People in My Contacts check box.**
9. **If you want Gmail to respond only to messages from folks in your company, select the Only Send a Response to People in *Company* check box (where *Company* is the name of the place where you work).**
10. **Click Save Changes.**

Selecting messages

When you want to work with one or more messages in Gmail, you begin by selecting the message or messages you want to work with. Here are the techniques to use:

- » To select a single message, select the check box that appears to the left of the message.
- » To select multiple messages, select the check box beside each message.

- » To select all messages, select the Select check box (pointed out way back in [Figure 2-1](#)) or pull down the Select list and click All.
- » To select none of the messages, clear the Select check box or pull down the Select list and click None.
- » To select those messages that you have read, pull down the Select list and click Read.
- » To select those messages that you haven't read yet, pull down the Select list and click Unread.
- » To select those messages that have a star, pull down the Select list and click Starred.
- » To select those messages that have no star, pull down the Select list and click Unstarred.



REMEMBER *Starring* a message acts as a visual reminder that the message is special in some way. To star a message, click the Star icon that appears to the right of the message check box.

Dealing with the Onslaught

Do you receive a lot of email? No, really, I mean do you receive a *lot* of email? I thought so. Welcome to life in the 21st century! Email is a massive part of everyone's life these days, but the in-your-faceness of email doesn't mean that you have to let email run your life. Gmail offers quite a few tools for making email manageable. No, Gmail can't reduce the sheer volume of messages you receive every day, but you can use some techniques and tricks to put email in its place.

Cleaning out your inbox

You probably don't want your messages gumming up your inbox forever, so Gmail gives you a fistful of ways to deal with the clutter. Select the message or messages you want to work with, and then click one of the following icons (see [Figure 2-15](#)):

- » **Archive:** Moves the message to the All Mail label. (To see this label, click More on Gmail's main menu — the one running down the left side of the screen — and then click All Mail.)
- » **Report Spam:** Moves the message to the Spam label. (To see this label, click More on Gmail's main menu and then click Spam.)
- » **Delete:** Moves the message to the Bin label. (To see this label, click More on Gmail's main menu and then click Bin.)
- » **Move To:** Moves the message to a label you specify. If the label doesn't exist yet, click Create New in the dialog box that appears. You can also drag the message from the inbox and drop it on another label on the main menu.

For more ways to get your Inbox squeaky clean, see “[Muting a conversation](#)” and “[Snoozing a conversation](#)” later in this chapter.

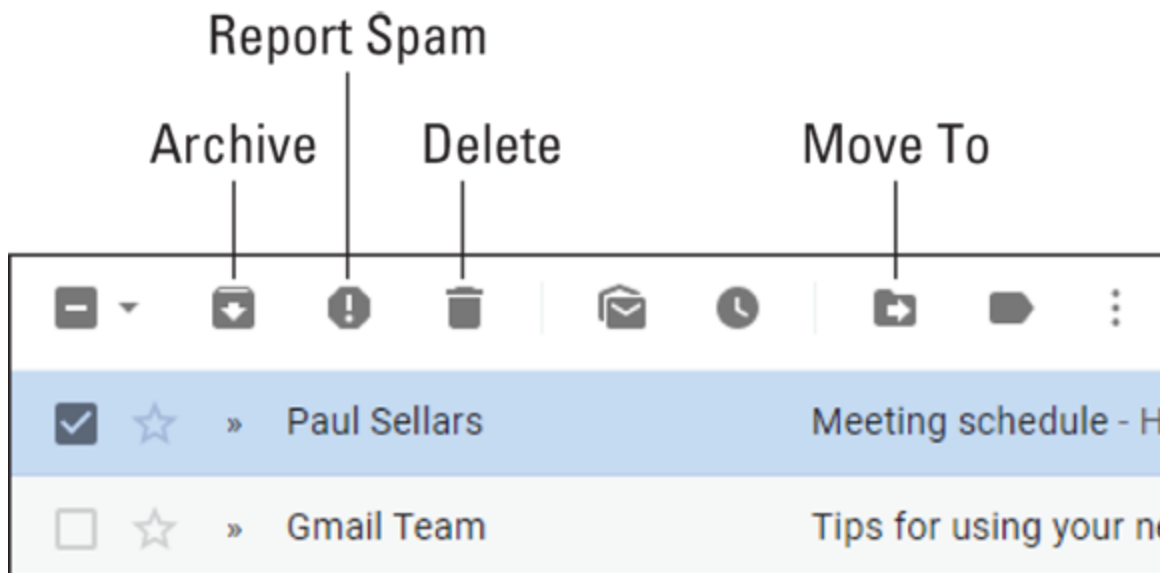


FIGURE 2-15: Commands you can run to move the selected message out of the inbox.

Labeling your messages

Earlier in this chapter, I talk about how Gmail eschews the usual email folders in favor of labels, which look and act very much like folders. However, labels are much more flexible than folders because you're free to apply multiple labels to any message. Whatever label you apply to a

message, you can see that message and all the other messages that have the same label by clicking the label name on Gmail's main menu.

Gmail, bless its do-it-myself heart, often labels messages for you. For example, newly received messages automatically get the Inbox label, messages you're working on get the Drafts label, messages you've dispatched get the Sent label, and messages you've deleted get the Bin label. Gmail can also apply a label to an incoming message based on the sender, the subject, or the body. For example, a message from your boss or your G Suite administrator might get the Important label.

How do labels help you deal with your daily deluge? Essentially, labels enable you to categorize your emails in a way that makes it easy to find the ones you want to work with. If your inbox is overstuffed with a few hundred or a few thousand messages, scrolling through such a seemingly endless list to find a message from your boss can be both time-consuming and frustrating. But if you know that either you or Gmail have slapped the Important label on that message, you can head for the Important label on the main menu and the message will be there — no doubt much easier to find because that label will have comparatively fewer messages.

Putting a label on a message

To apply a label to a message, first select the message and then use any of the following techniques:

- » To remove the Important label, click More (the three vertical dots) and then click Mark as Not Important.
- » To apply the Important label, click More and then click Mark as Important.
- » To apply the Starred label, click the Star icon that appears to the right of the message check box.
- » To apply the Snoozed label (which I discuss in more detail a bit later in this chapter), click Snooze. (Refer to [Figure 2-20](#).)
- » To apply the Mute label (which I discuss any minute now), click More (the three vertical dots) and then click Mute.

- » To apply the Bin label, click Delete. (Refer to [Figure 2-15](#).)
- » To apply the Spam label, click Report Spam. (Again, refer to [Figure 2-15](#).)
- » To apply any other label (including labels you make up yourself, as I discuss next), click Labels, select the check box of each label you want to use (see [Figure 2-16](#)), and then click Apply.

Label

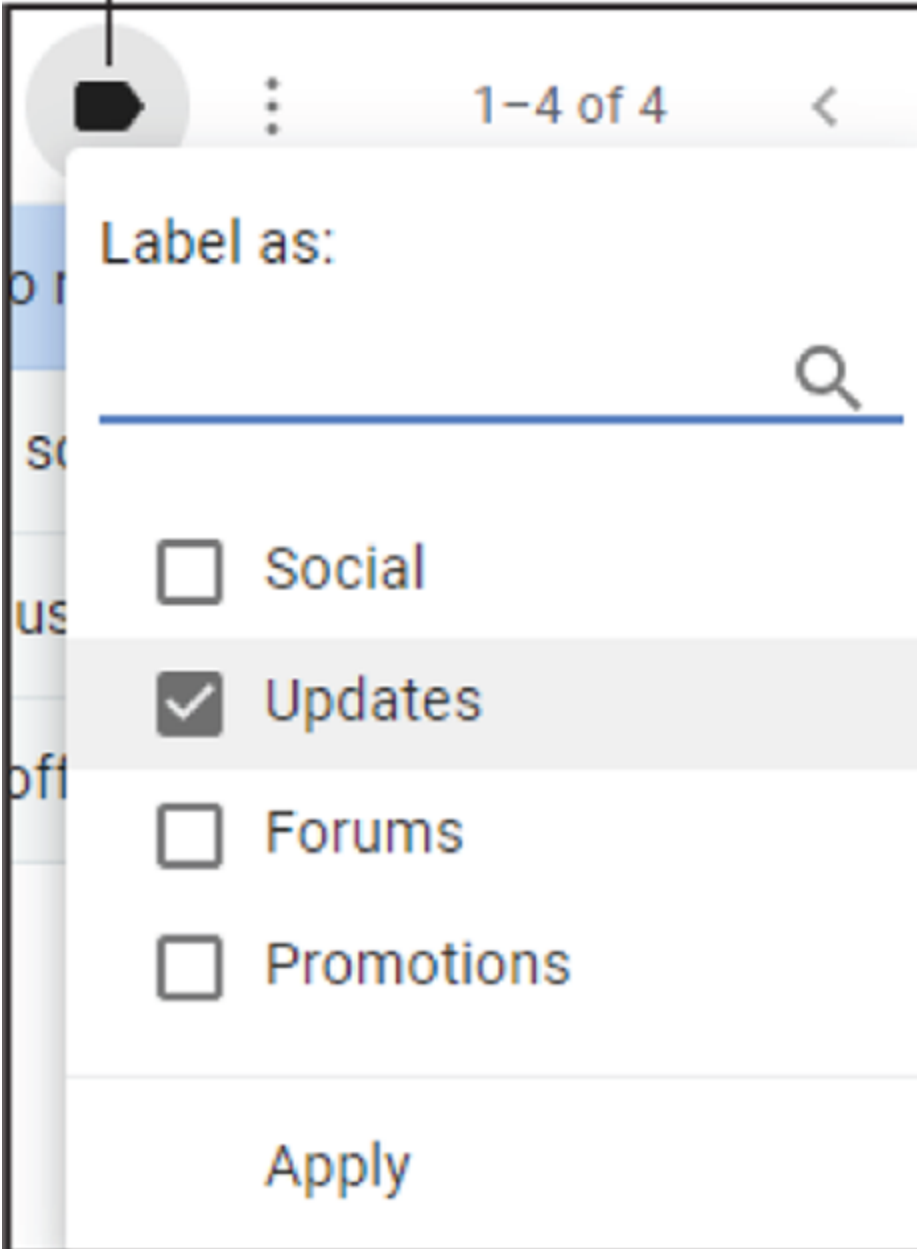


FIGURE 2-16: Click Labels and then select the label (or labels) you want to apply to the message.

Creating a new label

Labels become truly useful when you make up your own. What labels do you need? That depends on the types of email you get, the people you correspond with, and so on. You can make up labels for people, projects, teams, departments, your current mood — whatever makes sense to you and whatever fits with your email workload.

Here are the steps to follow for creating a custom label:

1. Start a new label.

Gmail gives you two main ways to get the label-making process off the ground:

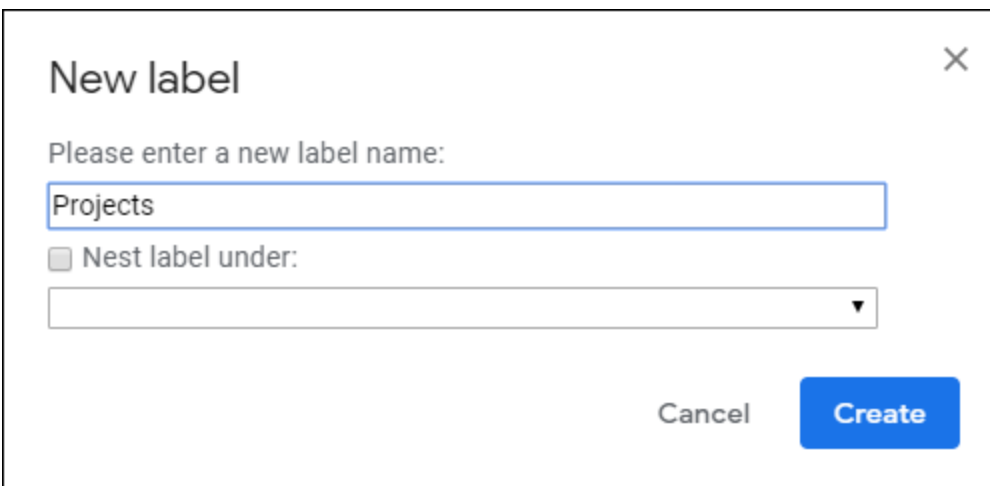
- Select any message and then choose Labels ⇒ Create New.
- Click More in the main menu's label list running down the left side of the screen, and then click Create New Label at the very bottom of the expanded list.

Gmail displays the New Label dialog box. (See [Figure 2-17](#).)

2. Enter the label name in the Please Enter a New Label Name text box.

3. Click Create.

Gmail creates your label and adds it to the label list.



The image shows a screenshot of the 'New label' dialog box in Gmail. The dialog box has a title bar with the text 'New label' and a close button (X) in the top right corner. Below the title bar, there is a prompt 'Please enter a new label name:' followed by a text input field containing the word 'Projects'. Below the input field, there is a checkbox labeled 'Nest label under:' followed by a dropdown menu. At the bottom right of the dialog box, there are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Create'.

FIGURE 2-17: Use the New Label dialog box to create a custom label for your messages.

Creating a nested label

In the same way that you can have subfolders within a folder, you can have sublabels with a label. However, rather than use the awkward term *sublabel*, Gmail calls a label-within-a-label a *nested label*. So, for example, you could create a top-level (Gmail calls it a *parent*) label named Projects and then create nested labels for each project you're working on. Similarly, you could forge a Teams label and then populate it with nested labels for each team you're a member of.

Assuming that you've already created the parent label you want to use, here are the steps to follow to add a nested label:

1. Start a new label.

- Select any message and then choose Labels ⇒ Create New.
- Click More in the main menu's label list running down the left side of the screen, and then click Create New Label at the very bottom of the expanded list.

Gmail conjures up the New Label dialog box.

2. Enter a name for the nested label.

3. Select the Nest Label Under check box.

4. Use the Nest Label Under drop-down list to select the parent label you want to use.

[Figure 2-18](#) shows an example.

5. Click Create.

Gmail creates the label and nests it under the parent label.

Customizing the label list

The main menu's label list contains five labels by default: Inbox, Starred, Snoozed, Sent, and Drafts. To see more labels, click More to expand the list and see all your labels, as shown in [Figure 2-19](#). To contract the label list, click Less.

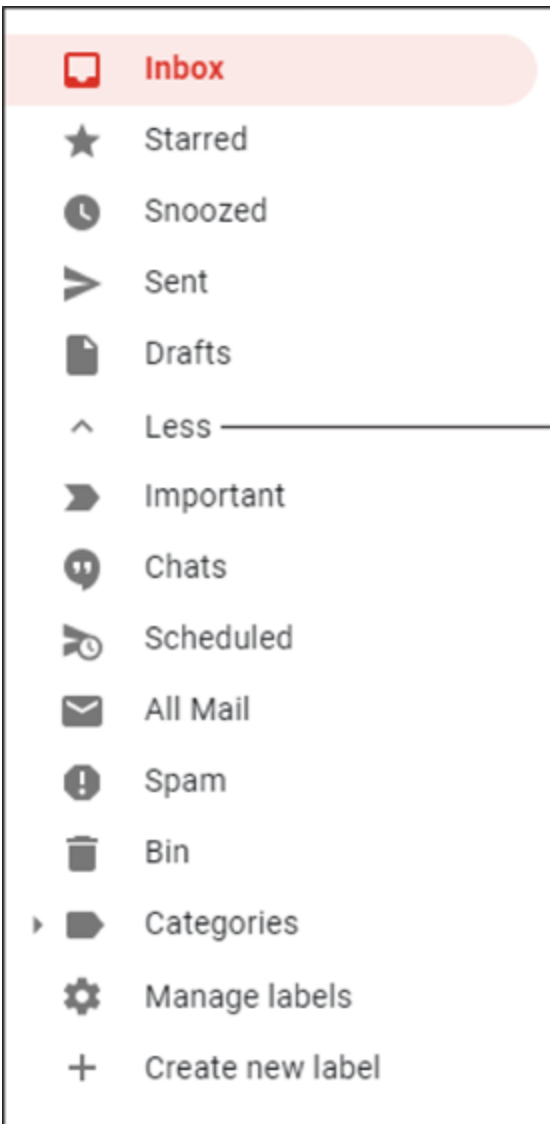
New label ✕

Please enter a new label name:

Nest label under:

Cancel Create

FIGURE 2-18: Select Nest Label Under and then select the parent label.



Click Less to contract the list.

FIGURE 2-19: Click More in the label list to see all your labels.

If you have a few important labels that you use frequently, it's a pain if those labels appear only in the expanded label list, because you have to click More to get at them. Forget that. Here's how to cajole Gmail into always displaying a label above the More command:

1. Choose Settings ⇒ See all settings and then click the Labels tab.

Gmail gives you two other ways to get to the Labels tab:

- Select any message and then choose Label ⇒ Manage Labels.
- Click More in the main menu's label list running down the left side of the screen, and then click Manage Labels near the very bottom of the expanded list.

The Labels tab displays a complete list of the predefined Gmail labels (these are in the System Labels section) and your custom labels (which you'll find in the Labels section).

2. If you want a label to appear above the More command in the label list, click that label's Show link.

Alternatively, if you want the label to appear above the More command only if the label has one or more unread messages, click the label's Show If Unread link. (Note that the Show If Unread link is available only for some labels, including all your custom labels.)

If a label already appears above the More link, you can remove it by clicking its Hide link.

Muting a conversation

Earlier, I talked about archiving a message, which means that Gmail moves the message to the All Mail label. That's a simple way of decluttering your inbox, but there's a problem: If you receive another message in the archived conversation, Gmail de-archives the entire conversation and plops everything back into the inbox. Sometimes that de-archiving behavior is exactly what you want, but what if you really are done with a particular conversation and don't want to see any more messages?

When an email conversation has lost its luster (assuming it had any luster to begin with), then rather than archive the conversation, you need to *mute* it. When you mute a conversation, Gmail moves the original message out of your inbox and into the All Mail label, but it keeps the conversation there, no matter how many new messages pour in. Ah, silence!

If that sounds like bliss to you, you can mute a conversation by selecting it, clicking More (the three vertical dots), and then clicking Mute.



REMEMBER If needed, you can always restore a silenced conversation to your inbox by opening the All Mail label, selecting the muted conversation, clicking More (the three vertical dots), and then clicking Unmute.

Snoozing a conversation

If an email conversation has gone off on a tangent that no longer interests you or is useful to you, muting (as I described in the previous section) is the right strategy for keeping that conversation from clogging your inbox. However, sometimes you might want to remove a conversation from your inbox only temporarily. For example, if you're busy, you might not want a conversation's frequent notifications interrupting your train of thought.

You can remove a conversation temporarily from your inbox by using Gmail's handy Snooze feature, which sends the conversation to bed until a date and time you specify. The conversation is still available in the Snoozed label, should you need to check in.

To snooze a conversation, follow these steps:

- 1. Select the conversation's check box.**
- 2. Click Snooze.**

Gmail displays the Snooze Until dialog box, which looks an awful lot like the one shown in [Figure 2-20](#).

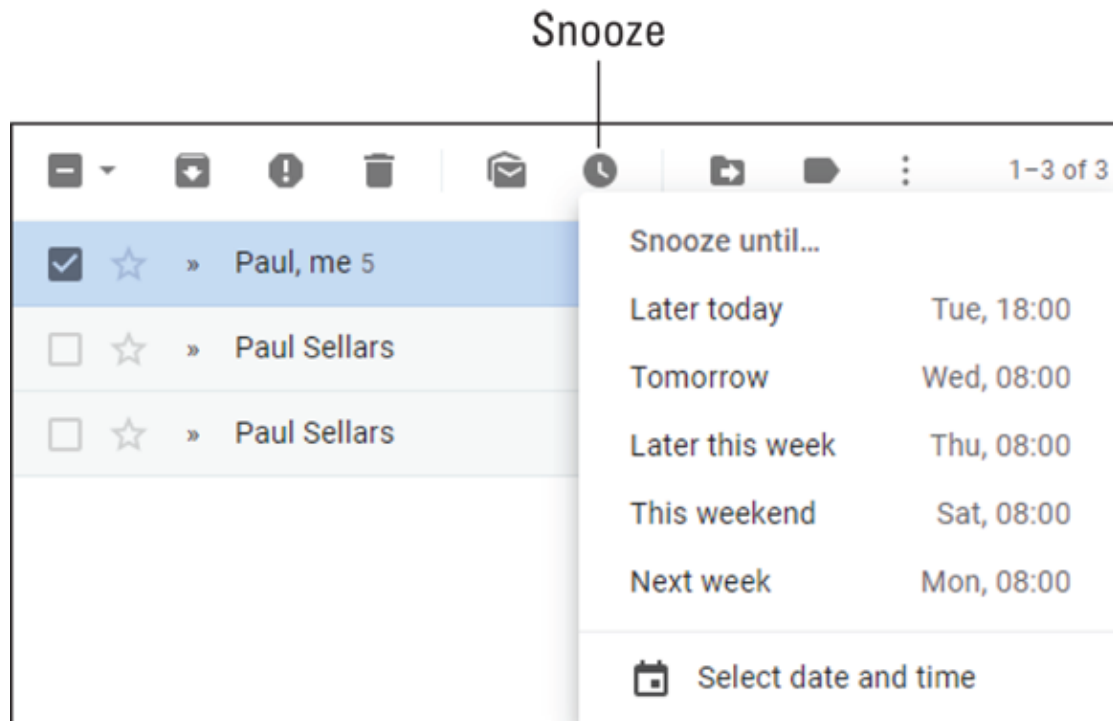


FIGURE 2-20: Use the Snooze Until options to set an end time for the conversation's nap.

3. **If you see a date and time that works for you, click it and skip the rest of this procedure.**

4. **Click Select Date and Time.**

Gmail opens the Select Date and Time dialog box, which offers a calendar and a time text box.

5. **Use the calendar to select the date on which you want the snooze period to end.**

6. **Use the text box to enter the time you want the snooze to end.**

7. **Click Save.**

Gmail makes a note to restore your conversation on the date and time you specified.



REMEMBER To wake up a snoozed conversation, open the Snoozed label, select the snoozed conversation, click Snooze, and then click Unsnnooze.

Searching for messages

There's a good chance you have a scarily large number of email messages squirreled away in Gmail's nooks and crannies. Even if you've moved messages out of your inbox and into one or more labels, deleted messages you don't want, and reported all that spam, finding a particular message is often a real needle-in-a-haystack exercise. Fortunately, Gmail comes with a power Search tool that can help you quickly and easily find any message anywhere it's located within Gmail.

You search Gmail using the big Search Mail text box at the top of the page. You can use one of these two methods:

- » **Use the text box to enter some text.** It can be a word, part of a word, or a phrase that matches the content of the message you want to find. As you type, Gmail works in the background, looking for emails that match, and then displays those matches in a list. (See [Figure 2-21](#).) When you see the message you want, click it.
- » **Click Show Search Options.** The options are pointed out in [Figure 2-21](#), which gets you face-to-face with the dialog box shown in [Figure 2-22](#). Use one or more of the fields to enter the criteria for the message or messages you want to locate, and then click Search.



FIGURE 2-21: When you enter search text into the Search Mail text box, Gmail displays a list of messages that match.

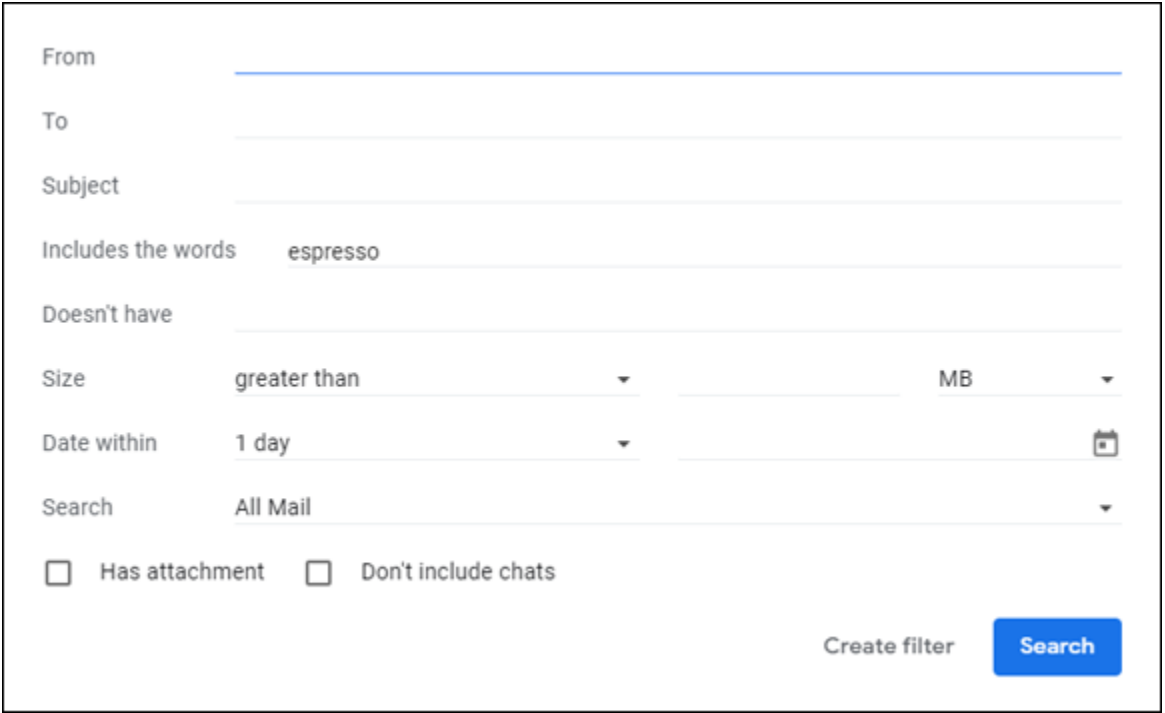


FIGURE 2-22: Click Show Search Options to use this dialog box for more targeted searches.

Filtering your messages

One reason that email dominates everyone's lives is that it requires so much maintenance: moving, archiving, labeling, starring, forwarding, deleting, and on and on. Take applying labels, for example. In theory,

labeling messages is a great way to keep your email organized, but it soon becomes a chore to apply labels to the majority of your messages.

However, you might have noticed that labeling and other email chores feel burdensome partly because you repeat the same task over and over. However, that repetitiveness is actually good news because it means that you can foist some of the work on Gmail. Specifically, you can create a filter that looks for messages that meet certain criteria and then runs one or more actions on any messages that match, such as applying a label, starring, or deleting.

It's a pretty sweet technique, and once you start using it, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. The good news is that if you already know how to search your email, as I describe in the previous section, you're halfway home because that's how you begin a filter. Here are the steps:

1. **Click Show Search Options, pointed out earlier, in [Figure 2-21](#).**
2. **Use one or more of the fields to enter the criteria for your filter.**

Remember that Gmail applies your filter to any incoming message that matches your criteria.



TIP

If you're creating a rule based on the address of an existing message, you can save yourself a bit of time by opening the message, clicking the message's More icon, and then clicking Filter Messages Like This. Gmail opens the criteria dialog box with the From line filled in automatically with the address of the sender.

3. **Click Create Filter.**
Gmail opens the dialog box shown in [Figure 2-23](#).
4. **Select the check box beside an action you want Gmail to perform on any incoming message that matches your criteria.**
5. **If the action requires more info, enter that info.**

For example, if you select the Apply the Label check box, use the Choose Label list to select the label you want Gmail to apply to the matching message.

6. Repeat Steps 4 and 5 until you've defined all the actions you want to run on the matching message.

7. Click Create Filter.

Gmail creates the filter and starts looking for incoming messages that match.

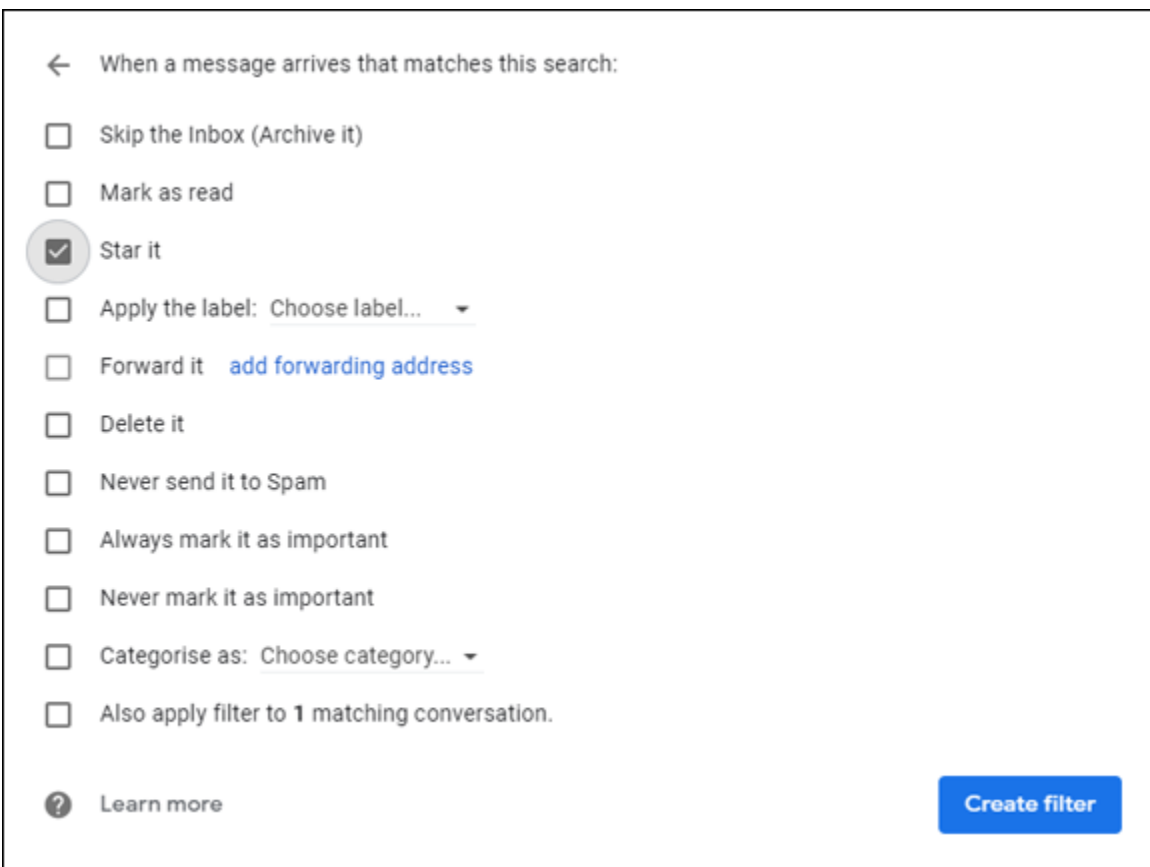


FIGURE 2-23: Use this dialog box to tell Gmail which actions to perform on incoming messages that match your criteria.



TIP If you want to create a filter that automatically deletes messages from a certain person, an easier method is to open a message from that person, click the message's More icon, and then click Block

'*Name*', where *Name* is the name of the person who is bothering you.



REMEMBER To manage your filters, click Settings, See all settings, and then click the Filters and Blocked Address tab. From there, you can edit a filter, delete a filter, and create new filters.