# Gmail

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Gmail** is a free webmail and POP e-mail service, currently in beta testing, from Google, Inc. It is known as **Google Mail** in the United Kingdom and Germany. Its competitors include Hotmail, AIM Mail, and Yahoo! Mail.



**Gmail**

Gmail screenshot

| | |
|---|---|
| **Maintainer:** | Google |
| **OS:** | Any (web based application) |
| **Genre:** | E-mail, webmail |
| **Website:** | https://mail.google.com/mail/ |

## Contents

# Overview

Gmail was initially released on April 1, 2004. Since Gmail is still in "beta", access to the service is restricted to those who had received an invitation from an existing account holder, from Blogger, or through their mobile phone. Some believe Gmail will continue to be invitation-only even after the beta phase in order to reduce the risk of spam.

While Gmail is not entirely open to the general public yet, most Gmail users have many invites to spare, as Google gives most users one hundred free invitations (and frequently replenishes them, as a reward for users who frequently check their Gmail accounts). [1] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gmail#endnote_randominvites) Gmail invites are also given away at random through Google's home page, and it is also possible to sign up if one has a mobile phone from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, New Zealand, Phillipines or the United States via SMS Signup (https://www.google.com/accounts/SmsMailSignup1) (see Beta testing phase) or a .edu e-mail address from an accredited U.S. institution[2] (http://services.google.com/university/cgi-bin/gmail). One can find free Gmail invites at various Web sites, such as the ones shown under External links or even for sale at online auctions. However, Google has prohibited the sale of Gmail addresses.

The service is notable for providing nearly 2.7 (and counting) gigabytes (as of 28 January 2006) of storage space (increased from the original limit of 1000 megabytes). This change was announced on April Fool's Day 2005, and was made for the one-year anniversary of Gmail. The announcement was accompanied by a statement that Google would continue to increase storage until they reached the theoretical limit (infinity gigabytes) then give each user one more. All Google will say about this now is that it will keep increasing by the second as long as they have enough space on their servers. Gmail makes intensive use of modern browser features such as JavaScript and keyboard access keys, allowing for a richer user experience, while retaining the benefits of a web application (most importantly, immediate availability of the service on any computer with a supported browser: Internet Explorer 5.5+, Mozilla Application Suite 1.4+, Firefox 0.8+, Safari 1.2.2+, Netscape 7.1+, or the Opera browser). Gmail also offers "Basic HTML view" to allow users to access the Gmail messages from almost any computer running

browsers that do not fully support the more advanced features. Gmail has recently also become accessible through WAP (wireless application protocol) enabled mobile phones.

There has been some criticism about Gmail's information and privacy policies. Much of it stems from phrases in Gmail's Privacy Policy (http://gmail.google.com/gmail/help/privacy.html) which state that Gmail will keep all e-mail for "some time" even if it has been deleted or the account terminated and that Gmail will disclose personal information (including the actual text of e-mails) if it has a "good faith belief" that such a disclosure is necessary for various reasons such as the very vague "protect the rights, property or safety of ... the public."[3] (http://www.gmail-is-too-creepy.com/)

Another unresolved issue discussed among privacy advocates is the lack of disclosed data retention and correlation policies. More than 30 privacy and civil rights organizations have urged Google to suspend Gmail service until these issues are resolved [4] (http://www.privacyrights.org/ar/GmailLetter.htm).

# Features

Gmail includes a number of original features as well as improvements upon those standard to web mail services.
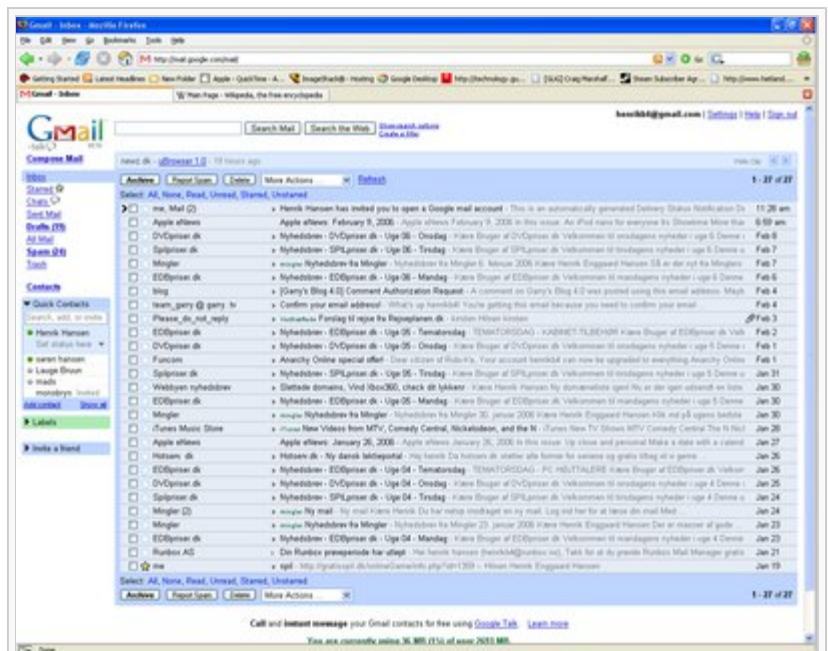


**Gmail inbox**
The main inbox view, as rendered by the Mozilla Firefox browser in Windows XP. Rather than showing individual e-mails, Gmail groups e-mails into **Conversations**, which are threads of e-mail correspondences, with the number of messages in each indicated in parenthesis.

### Sorting & organization

### Conversation views

The main innovation of Gmail is its method of categorizing e-mails, which Google calls Conversation View. In contrast to other e-mail services, Gmail keeps track of individual "conversations" (an original message, along with all the replies to that message), and allows users to view easily all the e-mails related to a
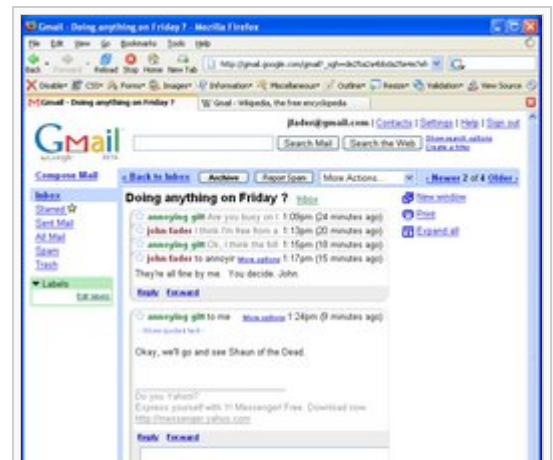
specific message. Gmail's algorithm for
determining how conversations fit together is not
sometimes become fragmented (especially when
unrelated conversations occasionally become atta
separate storage sections if there are more than 1:
chunks making up a whole conversation. Anothe
deleted if the user deleted one single e-mail whic
fixed when a "Trash This Message" button was a



**Thread view**
A number of messages in the same e-mail thread
are shown. The user can expand and unexpand
any message (quickly, using only client-side
JavaScript functionality) to view the content of
any number of e-mails simultaneously

### Labels instead of folders

Gmail allows users to categorize their e-mails with "labels." Labels give users a flexible method
of categorizing e-mails, since an e-mail may have any number of labels (in contrast to a system in
which an e-mail may belong to only one folder). Users can display all e-mails having a particular
label and can use labels as a search criterion. Gmail also allows users to set up filters which label
incoming e-mail automatically.

Users can simulate the functionality of folder-based filtering by applying labels and archiving
mail as it arrives.

### Filtering

Filters can be run only on incoming mail by using an interface similar to the Search Options
dialog (see searching below). Gmail allows users to filter messages by their text; their From, To,
and Subject fields; and by whether or not the message has an attachment. Gmail can perform any
combination of the following actions upon a message that meets a label's criteria: Archiving (i.e.
removing the message from the Inbox), marking as "starred", applying a label, moving to the
trash, and forwarding to another e-mail address.

### Searching

Gmail allows users to search by a number of criteria:

- whether the message "has" or "does not have" a certain phrase
- the message's From, To, and Subject fields
- the message's location (All Mail, Inbox, Starred, Sent Mail, Spam, Trash, All & Spam &
  Trash, Read Mail, Unread Mail, or a label)
- whether the message has an attachment
- the message's date within a given range (e.g. all messages received within one week of
  January 1, 2004)

Gmail also allows users to construct advanced search strings. For example, the following search
strings would search for all e-mails from Bob to anyone with the subject field containing "work"
or "school" but not "close friend", labeled as "to do" or "pending" among all that are not in
"Inbox" (which means it is archived), with a PDF attachment, and with a carbon copy to self,
limited to the date range between May 1, 2004 and June 1, 2004, that are not starred:

```
from:bob subject: (work OR school -{close friend}) (label:(-
inbox) in:to-do OR label:pending) has:attachment filename:pdf
in:unstarred cc:self after:2004/05/01 before:2004/06/01
from:bob subject: (work OR school -{close friend}) (label:to-
do OR in:(pending)) -(in:inbox) has:attachment filename:pdf
in:unstarred cc:self after:2004-05-01 before:2004-06-01
```

*(Note that logical operators (e.g. OR, AND) must be in upper-case)*
*(Also note that field operators cannot contain blank values ([buggy] unless it is the operator in the string))*
*([buggy] Excluding Inbox from searches does not work as expected because messages not to yourself are not considered in the inbox)*

*See also: How do I use Gmail's advanced search?*
*(http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=7190)*

Searching has a fixed limitation of 20 search results. See limitations

## Contacts

Gmail automatically saves one's contacts as one sends e-mail. If one changes, adds, or removes information near an e-mail such as the name while sending any e-mail, it also updates that in one's contact list.

When one starts typing in the To (or CC or BCC) field it brings up a list with one's relevant contacts. Experience has shown that this "little Google search" on one's contacts is not too effective and it is made only to work with the two main fields of each contact and it is still restricted to Name and Primary E-mail. But it does provide a good and easy interface.

Even because of the auto-completion feature, the auto saving creates a contact for each e-mail instead of trying to guess which e-mail should be together and which should be a different contact. That can raise one's contact list and make it chunky if one keeps more than one e-mail per person. One can also go to one's Contacts and add more information as one wishes. They are all basically just for one's note only.

It is possible to import contacts in several different ways, from Outlook, Eudora, Hotmail, Yahoo!, orkut, and any other contact list capable of being exported as a CSV file. It does allow one to export one's contacts to CSV as well.

A more recently added feature is Contact Groups, allowing a number of contacts to be combined under one label (similar to how e-mails are labeled), from which emails can be easily sent to a group of addresses.

## Auto save enhancement

Gmail has added a system of Auto Save, a system for avoiding loss of data in case of a browser crash or other error. This feature automatically saves a "draft" copy of the current message once per minute.

## Two gigabytes of storage

Beginning on April 1, 2005 (Gmail's first birthday), Gmail started to offer two gigabytes of e-mail storage space, which is increasing steadily ever after, partly in reply to Yahoo! Mail, who themselves offered 1GB of storage for their e-mail service. This figure and the original offering of 1000 megabytes are hundreds of times more than other webmail services offered at the time of Gmail's original announcement in 2004. Google suggests that users "archive", rather than delete their messages; Gmail's more than two gigabyte of storage is sufficient to hold many years' worth of an average user's e-mails, and Gmail's search technology allows users to search their archives easily. Additionally, users can store files (up to ten megabytes in size) as e-mail attachments.

**Current storage limit** — As of February 17, 2006, the maximum storage capacity has already

exceeded 2.695570570 GB. [5] (http://mail.google.com/mail/)

Until October 2005, the rate of increase was one hundred megabytes per month, but has since slowed to an increase of one megabyte every three days (or about ten megabytes per month).

# Interface

## Javascript Interface

Gmail's interface relies heavily upon JavaScript, a client-side scripting programming language, to asynchronously request data from the Gmail servers without reloading the entire page. Contrary to popular belief, Gmail's interface is not an example of Ajax techniques - instead of XML, data is transferred with chunks of JavaScript code (http://johnvey.com/features/gmailapi/). Since much processing takes place on the user's computer, relatively little information must be transferred between Gmail's web servers and the client, so the interface should run quickly, even over a dial-up connection.

In late February 2005, Google rolled out a "basic HTML view" Gmail interface, accessible from any HTTP 1.1-compliant web browser (previously, Gmail was only accessible via a few modern browsers in "standard view"). The HTML interface does not use JavaScript, and is much slower than the standard interface.



**Compose view, with spell checker**
The user is composing a new e-mail, and has invoked the client-side spell checker feature. Like the spell checker in a word processor, the user is shown words which are not recognized, and can either pick a replacement from a list or manually enter an alteration. In addition, Gmail's spell checker has limited non-English language support; it can detect one's message's language and spell-check in that language. Some ideograph-based languages like Chinese are not supported.
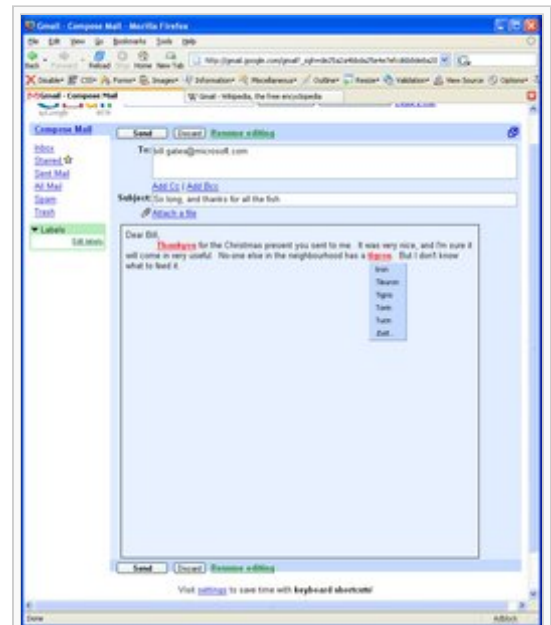
## Keyboard shortcuts

Gmail allows users to navigate its interface by using the keyboard as an alternative to the mouse, which is the norm for site navigation. This feature is not enabled by default, although instructions on how to enable it (http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=6594) are provided.

## Rich text formatting

A feature added to Gmail on its first birthday, rich formatting, allows users to set the size, font, color, and alignment of text, create bullet points and numbered lists, in addition to several other features. With rich formatting enabled, messages to which one replies and forwards retain all embedded formatting, whereas plain text editing strips out all formatting including embedded graphics.

Rich formatting is currently only able to work on browsers that support WYSIWYG, such as Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer. Browsers that do not support WYSIWYG editing cannot take advantage of this feature.

**Text encoding**

At the time of this writing Gmail is the only major e-mail platform that sends all e-mail in Unicode by default, effectively endorsing the adoption of Unicode for e-mail. The encoding can be changed in user settings and by default it is UTF-8.

**Multi language support**

The Gmail interface currently supports 38 languages: Brazilian Portuguese, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English (UK), English (US), Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. However, when new features are added to Gmail, there is often a delay between them being available in US English and in other languages.



Gmail supports 38 languages. Here, its interface is shown in Japanese.

Gmail is the only provider so far that encodes all web pages and e-mails in the up-to-date Unicode standard (UTF-8). This means one can send and receive messages containing Latin special characters as well as Cyrillic and Asian signs without having to fear mutilation of the message (as it frequently happens to ISO-8859-encoded messages).

**RSS feeds**

After its one-year anniversary, Gmail started placing customizable RSS feeds in some interfaces. The RSS feeds are limited to a single line at the top of the page, which can be scrolled through by the user. The option now appears in all accounts as "Web Clips".

# Access & username handling

### POP3 access

Although not offered with the original release, Gmail allows all users to send and receive their e-mail via POP3 (over SSL) and SMTP. Some users have experienced authentication difficulties when trying to gain access to their accounts and have blamed Google for the problem; however, the authentication problem is likely due to the user needing to activate a setting within Gmail.

### Optional dots

Gmail usernames must be between 6 and 30 characters (inclusive) and made up of only letters, numbers, and dots. The use of dots, however, are optional (that is, Gmail ignores dots when resolving addresses). Google states (http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=10313) that "Gmail doesn't recognize dots (.) as characters within a username. This way, you can add and remove dots to your username for desired address variations." For instance, the account `google@gmail.com` receives mail sent to `goo.gle@gmail.com`,

g.o.o.g.l.e@gmail.com, etc. Likewise, the account goo.gle@gmail.com receives mail from google@gmail.com. However, when signing in it is necessary to include any dots used in the creation of the account.

Gmail therefore blocks users from creating addresses that vary by dots only. Consider two different people with the addresses john.doe@gmail.com and johndoe@gmail.com, who will each receive all e-mails intended for either one of the accounts.

### Plus-addressing

*Main article: E-mail address#Plus addressing*

Gmail also supports "plus-addressing" of e-mails. Messages can be sent to addresses in the form: gmail.user+extratext@gmail.com where extratext can be any string. Plus-addressing allows users to sign up for different services with different aliases and then easily filter all e-mails from those services. It does not appear, however, that the +string feature works when sending e-mail from a Gmail account to itself (the message so addressed appears only among the "sent" email, not in the "inbox").

### Custom "From:" addresses

Gmail also allows the user to add other email accounts to be used as optional sender addresses (http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=20616) on outgoing email. A verification process is performed to confirm the user's ownership of each email address before it is added. "Plus-addresses" can also be added as sender addresses in the same way. Moreover, any of the additional addresses can be set as the default address.

Optionally, a different "Reply-to:" address can be set for each "send as" address.

When using this feature, the address chosen will appear in the "To:" field of the email. The user's original Gmail account, however, still can be traced, appearing on a "Sender:" field in the email header. Example:

```
From: user@yahoo.com
Reply-to: user@aol.com
Sender: user@gmail.com
```

### Gmail Notifier



The Gmail Notifier (http://toolbar.google.com/gmail-helper/), an official tool offered by Google, displays a small icon in the notification area (see Taskbar) in Microsoft Windows and on the right-hand side of the menu bar in Mac OS X, indicating the presence of new mail in
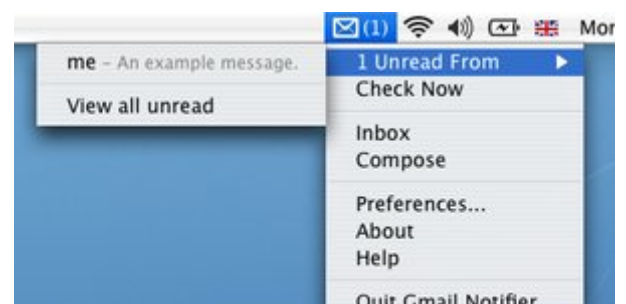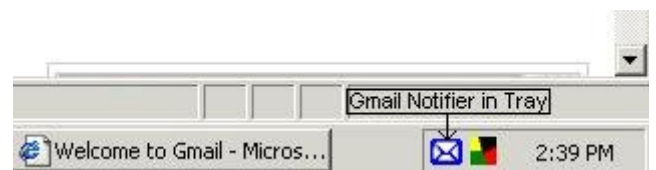
one's inbox. It also has a feature that makes
Gmail the default mail client for *mailto* links. It does not, however, download new messages.

On Windows, the Gmail Notifier is uninstalled (after a prompt to the user) if one installs Google Talk, which provides the same features and a new, updated interface.

Available to those who surf with Mozilla Firefox is the identically named Gmail Notifier (https://addons.mozilla.org/extensions/moreinfo.php?id=173) extension, first appeared around July 8, 2004 [6] (http://weblogs.mozillazine.org/doron/archives/005936.html), which is more than one month before the official one (August 21, 2004).

On Mac OS X v10.4's Dashboard, there is a Widget that is the Gmail Notifier

### Chats

Gmail's chat feature allows you to chat with other people that have a Gmail account. It interacts with the whole Google Talk network, so can be synchronised with that particular program. However, only text-based chat can take place within Internet Browsers; voice calling is Google Talk's advantage.

Because of the move away from e-mail, and therefore the name "Gmail", Google have decided to change the logo for Gmail, so that it includes '+ talk'. The logo also has a glossier finish compared to its predecessor.
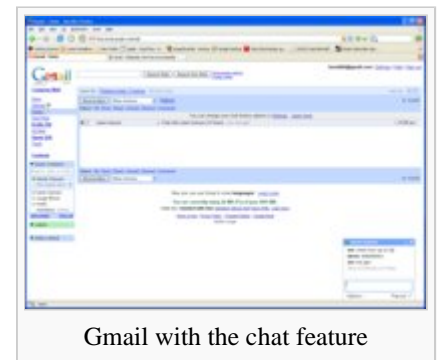

Gmail with the chat feature

This extra feature is only available in the English (US) setting of Gmail.

### Dormant accounts

Every account which is inactive for 9 months gets deactivated by Gmail. All stored messages get deleted and the account gets "recycled", which means the account name can be used by any other users afterwards. Other webmail services, like Yahoo! and Hotmail, have different, sometimes shorter, times for marking an account as inactive.

## Security

### E-mail signing

Gmail is the first major provider to sign outgoing mails with Yahoo!'s DomainKeys signatures.

### Anti-virus scanning

Gmail recently introduced a feature which automatically scans all incoming and outgoing e-mail attachments for viruses. If a virus is found on an attachment the reader is trying to open Gmail will try to remove the virus and open the newly cleaned attachment. Gmail also scans all outgoing attachments, and if a virus is found on an outgoing attachment Gmail will prevent the message from being sent until the attachment is removed; this is an innovation that has not been previously seen in other webmail services such as Hotmail or Yahoo. Despite the newly added anti-virus service, Gmail does not allow users to send or receive executable files (such as files ending in .exe or .com), even if they are sent within an unencrypted zipped (.zip, .tar, .tgz, .taz, .z, .gz) file. This makes it difficult to use Gmail to send programs to other users. A way users bypass this is to

change the file extension (to .txt or .exe_ or .zip_ for example) then change it back once the other user has retrieved the file.

### Spam filtering

Gmail offers a spam filtering system. Messages marked as spam are automatically deleted after 30 days.

# Shortcomings & criticism

The conversation view groups related messages in a linear stack, which can be expanded and collapsed. While this does provide an innovative view of an e-mail thread, it does not provide any way to differentiate messages


Gmail's spambox

that branch off from the original thread. This can occur when mail is sent to multiple recipients who respond individually.
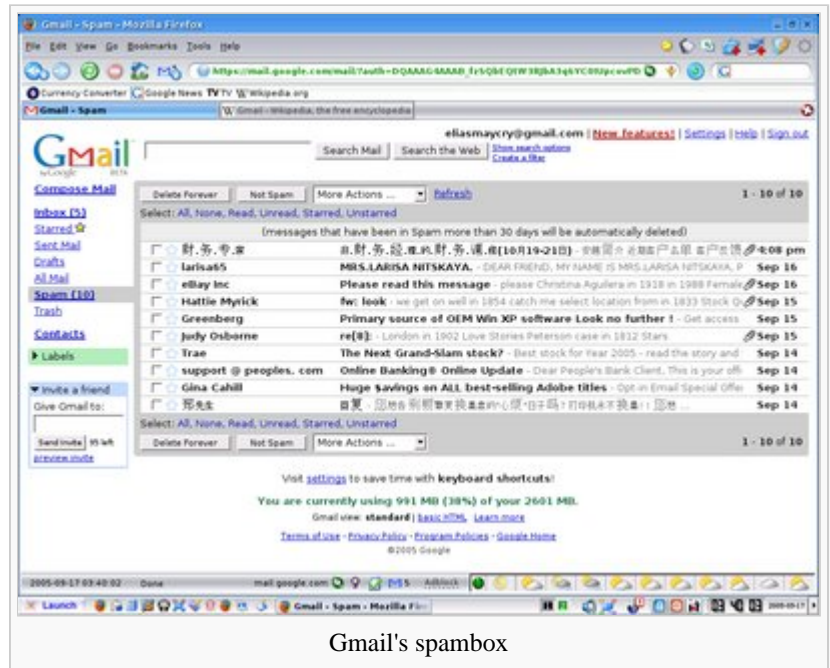
Google seems hesitant to release any upcoming plans for the implementation of these features.

### Absent features

The following features are **absent** from Gmail.

Some are provided by **another** kind of computer program, such as Eudora, Outlook Express or Apple Mail.

Some are provided by **same** kind of computer program, webmail applications (sometimes for a price), such as Yahoo! Mail and Hotmail.

Features present in Linux mail programs (such as Kmail) are: automatic spell-checking (by red underline), "attachment warning," and automatic bounce-back of unwanted mail (imitating a mail-daemon message). Gmail may or may not add these in the future.

#### General

Those are absent features that includes, at least, Organizing and Searching:

- The ability to **fully** use Google search technology on **Gmail**.
- The ability to **fully** use Google search technology on Gmail Contacts.
- The ability to search (or filter) in the whole e-mail, like in the headers.

#### Organizing

- The ability to group labels.
- Some conversation handling features such as adding an e-mail to a conversation and removing one from it.
- The ability to separate conversations, or to have e-mails not grouped into conversations by default.
- The ability to select "All" e-mails, or "All" contacts, or even apply labels to all selected e-mails, not only the limited amount displayed. (this is in fact a much bigger limitation than it may look like as using both features together can get really troublesome)
- The ability to use the *automatic* filter on messages already received. (although users can use Gmail's advanced search)
- The ability to do many actions with the same filter (although the user can always create a lot of filters).

### Searching

- The ability to search within text message attachments.
- The ability to go to the oldest item, or page, of any search / filter / label, whenever the list gets big enough.
- The ability to search beyond **20 results** (the settings / max page size only works for labels).
- The ability to use same searching syntax with filters.
- The ability to view the entire conversation threaded together from the inbox.
- The ability to retrieve relevant search results using partial queries (e.g., a search for "class" should also return occurrences of "classes")

### (E-mail) protocol resources

- The ability to import mail from external POP3 servers into the webmail account.
- The ability to queue messages to be sent automatically at a future chosen date and time.
- The ability to send a request for a return receipt with messages.
- The ability to mark the importance (e.g., "urgent") of a particular message.

### Others

- The ability to delete any attachment from a delivered message, be it sent or received.
- The ability to change signatures along with changing the "From" field.
- The ability to log in on the same account and mailbox by using Plus-addressing while enabling to customize configurations.
- An option to add description / information to Report Spam feature.
- The ability to edit the HTML of an email to personalize formatting.
- The ability to format a signature block with font types, colors, sizes, links, or pictures.

### Blacklisted

Some of the Gmail-proxies are listed on the blacklist of Spamcop. This means some e-mail sent from a Gmail-account will be bounced as spam when sent to providers using Spamcop as anti-spam measure. [7] (http://foo-projects.org/node/27)[8] (http://chris-linfoot.net/plinks/CWLT-6CALWG)[9] (http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2005/11/12/2081/9025)[10] (http://blog.globalreset.org/articles/2005/10/04/gmail-being-blocked-by-spamcop)

## Differences between interfaces

It has been noted that changing the interface language between English (UK) and English (US) will affect the overall interface. For example, the UK has different standards for date and time, as well as naming (ie: *Trash* versus *Deleted Items*).

While these are simple cosmetic differences, there are several limitations encountered within

various language interfaces:

## Non-US interfaces

Because Google is located primarily in the United States, non-US interfaces tend to lag behind in upgrades and features:

- Use of the Custom From Address feature is disabled. Custom From Address on Gmail Help (2005-11-29) (http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?ctx=gmail&hl=en&answer=20616)
- Web Clips (RSS/Atom Feeds) are disabled.
- Virus scanning feature is unavailable.
- Contact Groups are unavailable
- Vacation Responder is unavailable
- Chat is unavailable, but will be added.

## US interface

- When replying, the display does not show the original message's time, just the date.

## Bugs

- If the text of the subject was too long, labels would overlapped and be blocked by tool icons on the right side of the interface. This was fixed as of February 23, 2006.

## "Lockdown in sector 4"

In 2005, some Gmail users began reporting that their accounts were being locked for 24 hours or more. Account home pages were reportedly replaced with the flippant title: "Lockdown in sector 4!" along with a short explanation of the lockdown. Google's explanation was that the accounts



in question had conducted "unusual usage," although the users maintain their innocence. Most account lockdowns are lifted after 24-72 hours, although some users report being locked out again not long after [11] (http://www.gmailinvitation.com/archive/index.php/t-3257.html), though most of the time the user could clear their cache and reload the page, and the account would become unlocked again. It also may be worth noting that virtually all webmail providers will suspend an account if it is suspected of violating the provider's terms of service.

It is worth noting that many scripts for the Mozilla Firefox extension Greasemonkey have caused this problem as well.

In response to questions about the lockdown, Gmail sends an automated reply that directly tells you to not use Greasemonkey. From Gmail: "using certain browser extensions that change the behavior of a website (Greasemonkey, a popular Firefox extension, often interferes with Gmail. We suggest disabling Greasemonkey to use Gmail without any issues.)"

## The Privacy Issue

There has been a great deal of criticism regarding Gmail's privacy policy (http://mail.google.com/mail/help/privacy.html). Some of the controversy surrounded the clause "residual copies of e-mail may remain on our systems for some time, even after you have deleted messages from your mailbox or after the termination of your account." Many believed that this meant that Google would intentionally archive copies of deleted mail forever. Google continues to rebut some of this criticism by pointing out that Gmail is using mostly industry wide practices. [12] (http://gmail.google.com/gmail/help/more.html#data) Google later stated that they will "make reasonable efforts to remove deleted information from our systems as quickly as is practical."

Most of the criticism, however, was against Google's plans to add context-sensitive advertisements to e-mails by automatically scanning them. Privacy advocates raised concerns (http://www.epic.org/privacy/gmail/faq.html) that the plan involved scanning their personal, assumed private, e-mails, and that this was a security problem. Allowing e-mail content to be read, even by a computer, for advertising purposes, raises the risk that the constitutional expectation of privacy in e-mail will be reduced. Furthermore, non-subscribers' e-mail is scanned by Gmail as well, and these senders of e-mail did not agree to Gmail's terms of service or privacy policy. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that Google can change its privacy policy unilaterally, and that Google is technically able to cross-reference cookies across its information-rich product line to make dossiers on individuals.

Opponents of these views state that when one's e-mail is checked to see if it is spam, it is being scanned by the same process. Because a human is not reading the message, they say, it is not a problem.

Another unresolved issue discussed amongst privacy advocates is the lack of disclosed data retention and correlation policies. More than 30 privacy and civil rights organizations have urged Google to suspend Gmail service until these issues are resolved [13] (http://www.privacyrights.org/ar/GmailLetter.htm).

# History & Development

Gmail was announced amid a flurry of rumor. Owing to April Fool's Day, however, the company's press release (http://www.google.com/press/pressrel/gmail.html) was greeted with skepticism in the technology world, especially since Google already had been known to make April Fool's Jokes (such as PigeonRank (http://www.google.com/technology/pigeonrank.html)). However, they explained that their real joke had been a press release saying that they would take offshoring to the extreme by putting employees in a "Google Copernicus Center (http://www.google.com/jobs/lunar_job.html)" on the Moon. Jonathan Rosenberg, Google's vice-president of products, was quoted by BBC News (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3591589.stm) as saying, "We are very serious about Gmail."

Gmail also initially received a lot of criticism for a statement they made in their original terms of use, refusing to guarantee that all e-mails at Gmail would be deleted upon request by the user. Google later clarified that they were referring to backup copies of e-mails, and promised that all deleted mails would eventually be expunged completely from their servers. This, along with the feature that advertisements would be generated by software-based scanning of e-mails in order to better target them, gave rise to a controversy on web privacy (see BBC News Article (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3602745.stm) and google-watch.org (http://www.google-watch.org/gmail.html); for a defense see The Fuss About Gmail and Privacy: Nine Reasons Why It's Bogus (http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/wlg/4707)).

Before being acquired by Google, the gmail.com domain name was used by the free e-mail service offered by Garfield.com, online home of the comic strip *Garfield*. This free e-mail service has moved to e-garfield.com (http://www.e-garfield.com/).

As of June 22, 2005, Gmail's canonical URI has been changed (http://mathibus.com/blogmarks/2005/06/gmail-goes-301) to `http://mail.google.com/mail/` instead of `http://gmail.google.com/gmail/`.

## Beta testing phase

Google initially invited about 1,000 employees, friends, and family members to become beta testers, with trials beginning on March 21, 2004. Active users from the Blogger.com community were offered the chance to participate in the beta-testing on April 25, and later, Gmail members occasionally received "invites" which they could extend to their friends. One round of invites was sent out on May 1, and another three invitations were given to all active members on June 1; by mid-June, the number of invitations had increased, with many users receiving between three and five invites daily. On February 2, 2005, the invitation interface was changed to make it easier to give invites by simply entering an e-mail address and at approximately 3:00 UTC on February 3, 2005, some Gmail users were awarded 50 invites, and more recently, 100 invites, suggesting that Gmail would soon go public. Now, if one attends a Google Mini webinar, one will get a Gmail invitation. One is also able to recieve a invitation to GMail through the use of Google Mobile. More information can be found at http://www.google.com/enterprise/mini/product_tours_demos.html.

During the initial months of the Gmail beta, Gmail's well-publicized feature set and the exclusive nature of the accounts caused the aftermarket price of Gmail invitations to skyrocket. According to PC World magazine, Gmail invitations were selling on eBay for as much as US$150, with some specific accounts being sold for several thousand dollars. After a new round of invitations in early June, the price for invitations fell down to between US$2-$5. Several philanthropic Gmail users have utilized services such as the now defunct GmailSwap to donate invitations to people who want them. On June 28, Google amended its policy to forbid the selling of registered accounts. See the Official Gmail Program Policy (http://www.google.com/gmail/help/program_policies.html).

## Current Status

In March 2004, Google said that Gmail would probably be released publicly after six months of testing, which would have placed their launch in September 2004, but it is still in beta as of February 2006. Speculation also regarding the release date is right after *The New York Times* said they had "credible sources" saying "Gmail will be released publicly by the end of the year 2005." As of present, however, one needs an invitation from an existing user or to sign up via text

message using the gmail homepage (www.gmail.com) and a U.S. cellular phone that has SMS capabilities to get an account, and the site still says it is in the beta development stage. The number of invitations existing account holders can send has been varied, presumably to control the usage and growth of the system. For all intents and purposes, Gmail is open to the public now, since thousands of invites are publicly available from many websites. The use of the invitation/text message system helps prevent spammers from registering numerous accounts for purposes of spamming, and will ensure that any account used illegally will have another valid e-mail address or phone number to trace a user (the one to which the invite was sent).

In January 2005, security experts discovered a critical flaw in the handling of Gmail messages that would allow hackers to easily access private e-mails from any Gmail user's account. This was posted (http://hardware.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=05/01/12/1655246&tid=172&tid=215&tid=217&tid=218) with detailed information to popular technology site Slashdot at 9:23 a.m. PST on January 12, 2005. At roughly 10:15 a.m. PST on January 13, 2005, developers at Gmail announced that they had fixed the problem, and that the security flaw had been patched. Despite Gmail's status as a beta application, this raised concerns among some users who use Gmail as their primary mail account.

On April 1, 2005, exactly one year after the initial release, Gmail increased the mailbox size to 2 GB (advertising it as 2GB plus) and introduced some other new features, including formatted editing (giving users the option of sending messages in HTML or plain text). As of February 2006, the mailbox size is 2.63 GB, and is increasing continuously at a rate of approximately 10 MB per month.

On June 7, 2005, Isnoop.net Gmail Invite Spooler



The "New! Get Gmail - Google's free e-mail service with over 2GB of storage." promo that appears for a few days on some computers.

(http://isnoop.net/gmail/) was deactivated by the site moderator, due to intolerance by Google. It was explained that Gmail's Product Manager would no longer tolerate the service, and was shut down midnight PDT. The service was featured in Popular Science magazine, and had given out over 1.2 million Gmail accounts.

Since July 11, 2005, or more likely earlier, Google has been giving away free Gmail accounts to random people who search for the word "gmail" using the Google search engine. Follow this link (http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=Gmail&btnG=Google+Search) and look at the top of the page for the promo that says "New! Get Gmail - Google's free e-mail service with over 2GB of storage." However, this promo may only last a few days for a particular IP address, before it does not show up any more. ^

On August 24, 2005, Google offered a new method of signing up for a Gmail account via mobile phone text messaging. The public would be able to obtain an account by submitting a U.S. mobile phone number to Google, which would then send a text message with an invitation code that would be used to create a Gmail account. Numbers are stored in order to keep track of the number of accounts created which is limited to ten per phone number. This method of creating accounts makes it difficult for spammers to send out spam messages, getting spam delivered, or obtaining an account thus keeping Gmail as spam-free as possible. This method is currently only available to people with a U.S. mobile phone number. See https://www.google.com/accounts/SmsMailSignup1.

On August 30, 2005, Gmail started to add the facility to customize the address that messages are sent from on outgoing mail to some accounts. This adds option for outgoing messages to appear as if they had been sent from an alternative e-mail address, rather



This shows the option to choose which address a message appears to be sent from.
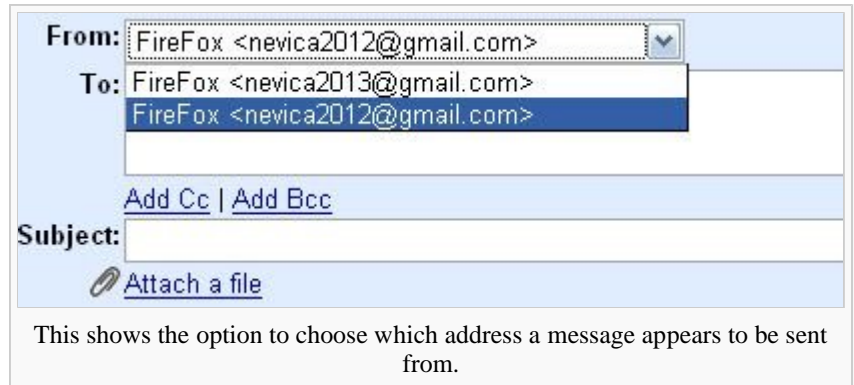
than from the Gmail account. Right now, this option is only available for accounts that have set English (US) as Gmail display language. Gmail Help Center. (https://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?ctx=gmail&hl=en&answer=20616), but users can switch to another language and keep using this feature after adding another address.

In August 2005, Gmail started offering 100 invites to some users.

In October 2005, Gmail withdrew use of *username*@gmail.com within the UK, due to a dispute with the UK company Independent International Investment Research (IIIR), who own the *gmail.co.uk* domain. From October 19, any new UK users wanting a gmail account were forced to have *username*@googlemail.com. There is still a concern that old UK users will also have to change to the new domain sometime in the future.

In December 2005, Gmail added a "Vacation responder" (to provide automatic response to e-mails), and Contact Groups (allowing e-mail to be sent to a number of contacts, in a user defined group).

On December 16, 2005, Google quietly released a version of GMail for the mobile device, which they named "GMail Mobile". [14] (http://gmail.pro/2005/12/16/google-officially-introduces-gmail-mobile) This product competes with, and has features similar to an open source version of GMail Mobile 1.0 which was launched just 3 weeks earlier by the SourceForge community.

On January 17, 2006, Gmail added a delete button to the menu bar. This now allows users to easily delete their messages.

On February 7, 2006, Gmail added the ability for users to chat with others on their contact list when logged into their account. A Quick Contacts box displays names of people that are emailed most often and when a name is clicked, a chat session or email will start. Chat sessions will then show up on the bottom right corner or it can be popped-out into a new window. Users have the option to save their chats in a Chat History.

## Gmail for your domain

On February 10, 2006, Google introduced Gmail for your domain (https://www.google.com/hosted/Home). This service, currently in beta testing, allows organizations to offer e-mail services through Gmail using their own domain. San Jose City College (https://www.google.com/hosted/jaguars.sjcc.edu) is one of the organizations currently using this service. Google may eventually open the service to all domain owners, as Microsoft has with its Windows Live Custom Domains (http://domains.live.com/) service.

## Gmail in other languages

- On April 13, 2005, Gmail became available in several languages: British English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and simplified and traditional Chinese.
- On June 30, 2005, Gmail became available in 4 new languages: Danish, Finnish, Polish, and Swedish.
- On August 9, 2005, Gmail became available in 12 new languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Latvian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.
- In the beginning of September 2005, Gmail became available in 9 new languages: Catalan, Czech, Estonian, Hindi, Lithuanian, Romanian, Tagalog, Thai, and Turkish.

## Name change in Germany and in the UK

### Gmail in Germany

The German version of Gmail was first named Gmail Deutschland. Unfortunately for Google, the German company Giersch Ventures had already trademarked *G-mail* in 2001. The company later filed a lawsuit against Google for trademark infringement.

On 4 July 2005, Google announced that *Gmail Deutschland* would be rebranded *Google Mail*. From that point forward, visitors originating from a German IP would be forwarded to `googlemail.com` where they could obtain an email address containing the new domain. Any German user who wants a `gmail.com` address must sign up for an account through a proxy. German users who were already registered were allowed to keep their old addresses.

Despite this limitation, German users can still be emailed at their corresponding address containing the `gmail.com` domain. In many respects, the `googlemail.com` address is simply an alias. A German user interested in having their mail sent to `gmail.com` can simply change their reply-to address.

The Giersch Ventures lawsuit also forced Google to change the site's URL from `gmail.google.com` to `mail.google.com`, which briefly broke some applications and plugins that relied on this address to access the mail service.

### Gmail in the UK

On 19 October 2005, the UK version of Gmail was converted to Google Mail for similar reasons to those described above for Germany [15] (http://mail.google.com/mail/help/intl/en-GB/googlemail.html).



To register a @gmail.com email address in the UK, a proxy server

such as VTunnel (http://www.vtunnel.com/) can be used to avoid the @googlemail.com address UK residents are given. As of the 9th February 2006, users in the UK appear to be seeing the main logo "Gmail+Chat" as opposed to the expected Google Mail logo. However, on the day afterwards, it was changed back to Google Mail, suggesting a mistake in the process.

The Google Mail logo

# Competition

*Main article: Webmail*

After Gmail's initial announcement and development, many existing web mail services quickly increased their storage capacity. For example, Hotmail went from giving some users 2MB to 25MB (250MB after 30 days), while Yahoo! went from 4MB to 100MB. Yahoo storage then proceeded to 250MB, and finally, in late April 2005, to 1GB. These were all seen as moves to stop existing users from switching to Gmail, and to capitalize on the newly rekindled public interest in web mail services. The desire to catch up was especially visible for Microsoft's Hotmail, which upgraded its e-mail storage erratically from 250 MB to the new Windows Live Mail (beta) which includes 2 GB of storage over a number of months. In August 2005, AOL started providing all AIM screen names with their own e-mail accounts with 2 GB of storage. Another example of great competition came from http://www.30gigs.com/ (http://www.30gigs.com/) who were offering 30 gigabytes of storage, and was also invite only.

Other than the general increase of storage limit, there has also been an improvement of the e-mail interfaces of Hotmail and Yahoo after the launch of Gmail. The e-mail attachment size of 10MB was also matched by Yahoo and Hotmail during the year 2005.

# Getting Help in Gmail

When users first sign up for Gmail, they are prompted to take the Gmail Tour (http://www.google.com/mail/help/tour/start.html) which teaches them the basic features and what makes Gmail different. Clicking on "Help" at the top right hand corner of Gmail takes a user to the Gmail Help Center (https://mail.google.com/support/?ctx=gmail&hl=en). If the Gmail Help Center does not answer a question, a user can contact Gmail (https://mail.google.com/support/bin/request.py?contact=1&ctx=contact-us). Alternatively, a user can also ask other users for help on Gmail Help Discussion[16] (http://groups.google.com/group/Gmail-Help-Discussion), a Google Group for users to give and receive help on Gmail.

# See also

- List of Google services and tools
- Hotmail
- Yahoo! Mail
- Windows Live Mail

## Add-Ins

- PhpGmailDrive
- Gmail Drive
- GmailFS

- RoamDrive

# External links

- Gmail (https://mail.google.com/mail/)
- Gmail Tips

(http://g04.com/misc/GmailTipsComplete.html)
- O'Reilly on Gmail Hacks
(http://www.windowsdevcenter.com/pub/a/windows/2005/01/25/Gmail.html)
- Interview with Sergey Brin about the future of Gmail
(http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1572683,00.asp)
- Google help and discussion group (http://groups.google.com/group/Gmail-Help-Discussion)

Wikibooks has more about this subject:
**Gmail**

## FAQs

- Gmail - Google FAQ (http://gmail.google.com/gmail/help/about.html)
- Google's Gmail: A Rough Guide to Protecting Your Privacy
(http://www.eff.org/effector/17/13.php#II) - EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation)
- Gmail Privacy FAQ (http://www.epic.org/privacy/gmail/faq.html) - EPIC (Electronic Privacy Information Center)
- Gmail - The Unofficial Gmail FAQ (http://blog.outer-court.com/gmail-faq.html)

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