



# A beginner's guide to email

Helping you to stay in touch



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# 1. Introducing you to email

## 1. Introducing you to email

Hello,

Welcome to Age UK's beginner's guide to email. This guide will show you how to set up an email account and send and receive emails so you can stay in touch with people.

You can use email on most electronic devices with an internet connection, such as a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

### Why I like email

I've found that email is a great way to keep in touch with friends and family, and is much quicker and cheaper than sending a card or letter in the post. You can write to people online, send pictures and even upload short videos to an email.

Having an email address is also useful in other ways. It means you can do everyday tasks like shopping and banking online. It's also now the main way companies and organisations keep in touch with customers. Email is definitely a handy thing to have as it will keep you connected with the wider world.

### Learning at your own pace

Learning a new skill can feel daunting. I felt the same way before I set up my own email account. It's why this guide contains step-by-step instructions to setting up your own email account. It also shows you how to send and receive your first email messages.

You can go through the steps by yourself, with the support of an Age UK Digital Champion, or with the help of friends, family and carers. It's best to work through the guide at your own pace, repeating any sections you want to focus on. Try to take the time to reflect on what you've learned, as this will help to build your skills and confidence.

If you've got any questions as you work your way through the guide, you may be able to get support from your local Age UK or local Age Cymru. You can find your local Age UK at [www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/)

Once you're feeling comfortable with the content in this guide, you can move onto our intermediate guide to learn how to use email to send photographs and documents.

I hope you enjoy using email as much as I do.

**Dereck, 75**

# 2. Using this guide

## 2. Using this guide

This is a beginner's guide for people wishing to set up an email account, and send and receive emails. We'll explain how to do this using Gmail and Outlook, which are two of the most popular free email service providers.

### **Before reading this beginner's guide, you should feel comfortable:**

- Connecting to the internet – you'll need an internet connection to send and receive emails.
- Using a smartphone, tablet, computer or laptop.

You can access your email on any device connected to the internet: a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Choose the device you feel most comfortable using.

We'll show you how to set up a Gmail or Outlook email account on any device through your web browser. We'll then show you how to download and use the Gmail and Outlook apps if you're using a smartphone or tablet.

**Note:** these screenshots might look slightly different on your screen depending on what device you are using. But the information you enter will be the same.



# 3. Understanding key terminology

### 3. Understanding key terminology

To help you get to grips with setting up an email account, we've put together this useful list of common words and phrases that you might come across. These are in alphabetical order so you can refer to them easily when working through the guide:

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**Application, or 'app':** A type of program that you can download for your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. There are lots of apps available, from games and puzzles to banking.

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**Attachment:** Any file, photograph, video or document you add to your email is known as an attachment. An email with an attachment is indicated by the symbol of a paperclip.

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**Device:** A general term for a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer.

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**Draft:** An email message you've written but not sent yet. You can save draft emails and return to them at a later date to edit and send them to recipients.

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**Download:** To transfer files or data stored on the internet onto your smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer. For example, you might download a picture that a friend has sent you over email, a document to read from a trusted website or an app from the online app store.

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**Email:** It's a way of sending and receiving messages over the internet. It's free and quick to use and has replaced letter writing as the most common way to keep in touch.

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**Email address:** When you set up an email account, you'll choose an email address. This is how people send you email and is similar to a postal address in that it's unique to you. An example is joe.bloggs@gmail.com (the '@' sign is pronounced 'at').

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**Email app:** Most email service providers have their own apps. These are a good way to access your emails quickly without logging into them through your web browser.

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**Email service provider:** To send an email you need to have an account and email address with an email service provider like Gmail or Outlook. These are online services that let you send, save and organise your emails and keep your account secure.

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**Inbox:** The virtual folder in your email account where any emails you receive are stored. Any new and unopened messages will sit in your inbox.

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**Junk:** Like the unsolicited mail you get through your letterbox, junk emails are messages from businesses advertising products and services. You can easily unsubscribe from these emails at any time.



### 3. Understanding key terminology

**Password:** Your password is chosen by you and keeps your email account secure. The National Cyber Security Centre recommends you use three random words as your password, for example, 'cupwalldog' or 'raincowbox'.

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**Search bar:** A box in a search engine where you can enter a topic to search for information on the internet.

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**Smartphone:** A mobile phone which connects to the internet. You can use it to do everything from sending emails to making video calls.

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**Spam:** These are emails from people and organisations that you did not request. Usually, your email service provider will automatically filter these into your Junk folder. If in doubt, avoid opening any emails from unknown senders. Spam and junk emails are often used interchangeably.

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**Subject line:** A short summary or title of what your email is about, for example 'Holiday update'. You can enter this into the subject box at the top of the email.

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**Subscribe:** To sign up to receive emails from people, businesses or organisations. By sharing your email address and opting in to their mailing list, you are subscribing to their marketing emails.

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**Tablet:** A small portable computer with a touch screen. You tap the screen with your finger or a special pen, often referred to as a 'stylus', to use the device rather than using a keyboard and 'mouse'.

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**Two-factor authentication:** An additional form of online security that helps to prove who you are. You might be asked for this when you try to log in to an online account. Usually, once you enter your password, you'll need to enter a code sent to your email account or your phone by text message to confirm your identity.

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**Unsubscribe:** If you no longer wish to receive emails from a particular business or organisation you can opt out of their mailing list. Usually, you can do this by clicking the 'Unsubscribe' link at the bottom of their last email.

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**Username:** When you set up your email account, you might be asked to enter a 'username'. You can choose your username, assuming what you want isn't already being used by someone else. You might want your username to be your name or a nickname.

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**Web/internet browser:** A program that runs on your device. It allows you to access webpages on the internet. Common web browsers include Microsoft Internet Explorer or Edge, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Apple Safari.

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**Webmail:** A way of accessing your email through your web browser.

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#### **Wireless network, or 'WiFi':**

How your phone, tablet, laptop or computer connects to the internet without using wires or cables. You can access public WiFi networks, for example when out and about, or arrange a contract with an internet provider so you can use WiFi at home.

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# 4. The benefits of email

## 4. The benefits of email

**There are lots of benefits to using email. Some of these benefits include:**

**Free.** Email service providers like Gmail and Outlook don't charge any fees for using their services. This means you can send and receive emails completely free of charge.

**Connects you with others.** Email is a fast, convenient way to send letters to family, friends, businesses and organisations all over the world.

**Helps you stay organised.** You can file and store all your correspondence in one place.

**Convenient.** You can send an email to more than one person at the same time.

**Makes life easier.** Having an email account makes it possible for you to carry out tasks online, like shopping, banking, dealing with utility providers, and even contacting your local GP surgery.

**Easy to access.** You can send and receive messages from any computer or device with an internet connection using webmail.



# 5. Choosing an email service provider

## 5. Choosing an email service provider

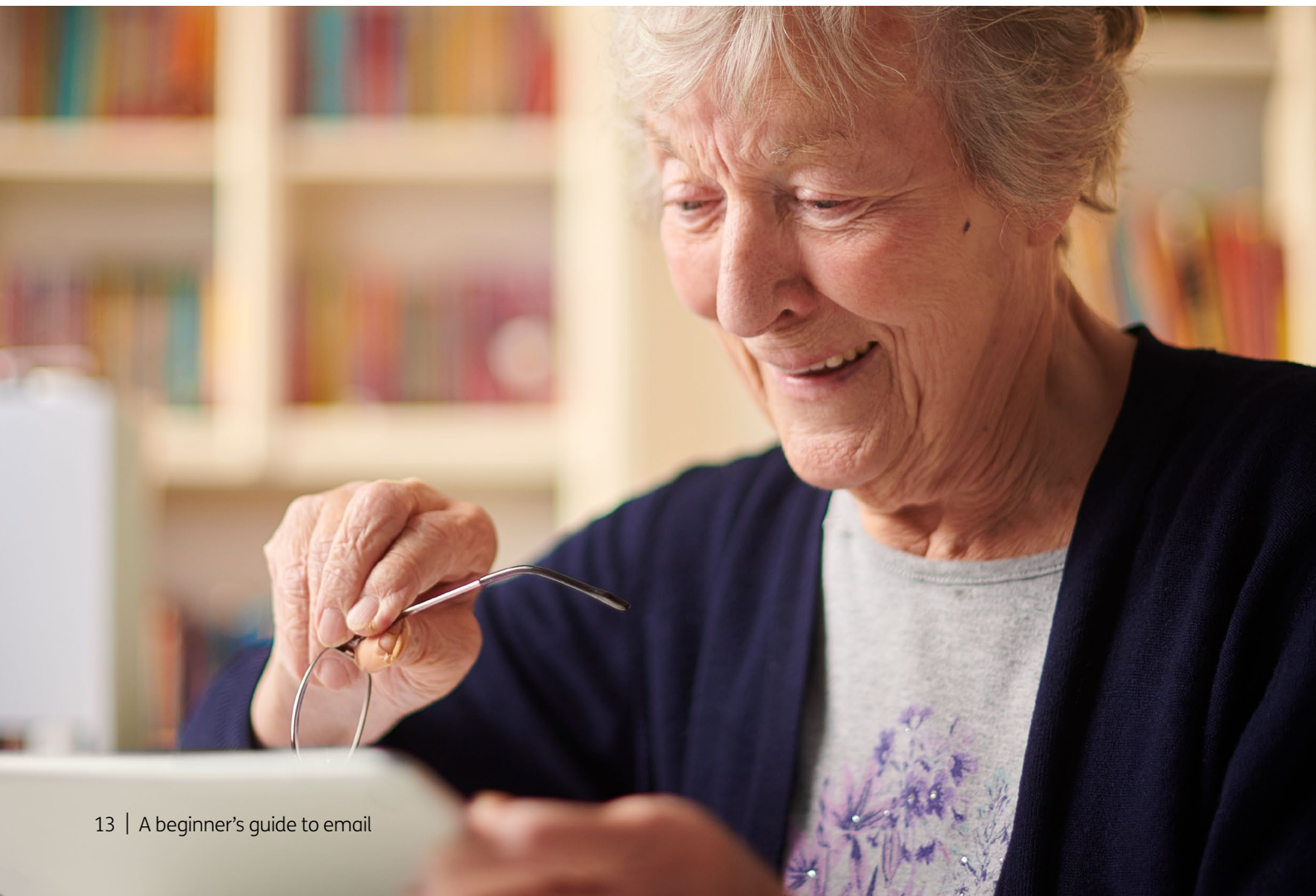
There are lots of different email service providers and all do a similar job. For the purposes of this guide, we're going to focus on two of the most popular email services: Gmail, provided by Google, and Outlook, which is provided by Microsoft.

Both offer a similar basic set up. You'll have an inbox, where you find your new emails, and folders for your sent items, junk mail and drafts (emails that you've written but not yet sent).

The main difference is how the folder structure works. With Outlook, you have a basic folder system where you can set up and assign emails to different folders, for example 'Bills', 'Family', 'Holidays'. You'll be able to choose what you name these folders.

With Google, you organise your files in a similar way but instead of folders you use labels and categories, creating a more organised filing system.

It's entirely up to you which email service provider you choose. Both are free and, once you get the hang of the basics, relatively straightforward to use.



# 6. Using Gmail

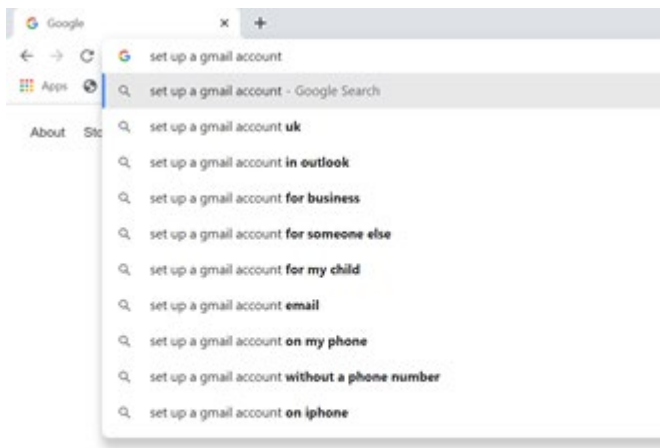
## 6. Using Gmail

### What equipment do I need?

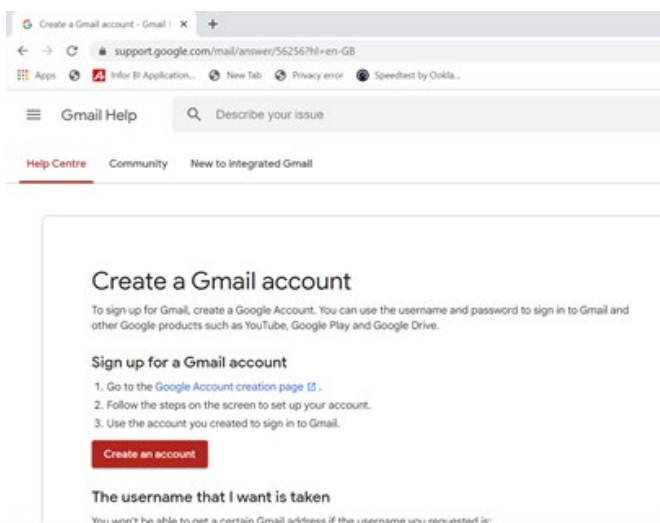
- You'll need a laptop, computer, tablet or smartphone.
- You'll also need an internet connection.

### Setting up your Gmail account

1. Go to your web browser (for example, Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome or Safari) and in the search bar type 'Set up a Gmail account'.

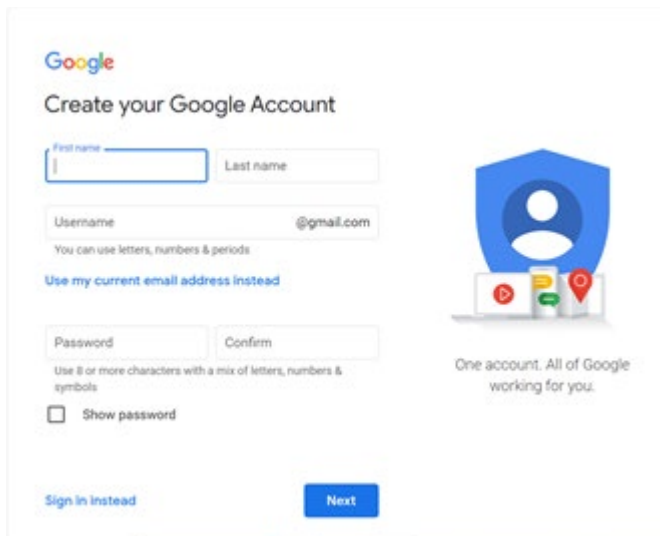


2. Click on the top link in the search, which should say 'Create a Gmail account'. This will take you through to the Google website. You'll need to set up a Google account, which gives you access to email (Gmail) and other Google services. Then, click on the red button that says, 'Create an account'.



## 6. Using Gmail

3. You will go to this page:



The screenshot shows the Google Account creation page. At the top left is the Google logo. Below it is the heading "Create your Google Account". The form consists of several input fields: "First name" and "Last name" (two separate boxes), "Username" (with "@gmail.com" pre-filled), "Password" and "Confirm" (two separate boxes), and a checkbox for "Show password". There is a link "Use my current email address instead" and a "Next" button. To the right of the form is a blue shield icon with a white person silhouette, and below it, the text "One account. All of Google working for you." and icons for YouTube, Gmail, and Maps. At the bottom left, there is a "Sign in instead" link.

Follow the instructions and fill in your details, including 'First name', 'Last name' and your 'Username', and set up a password ([see page 36](#) for tips on setting up a secure password).

Your username will be your new email address. This is your name followed by the email service provider's details. For example: joe.bloggs@gmail.com.

If your name is already in use by somebody else, you can add a number or special character after your name. For example, joe.bloggs12@gmail.com. Or you can choose something else that's memorable to you and that you'd be happy to share with others.

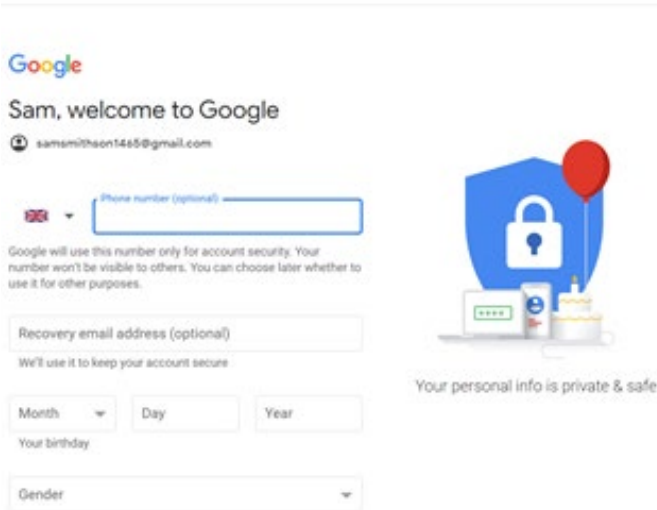
Once you have completed the form, click the 'Next' button.



## 6. Using Gmail

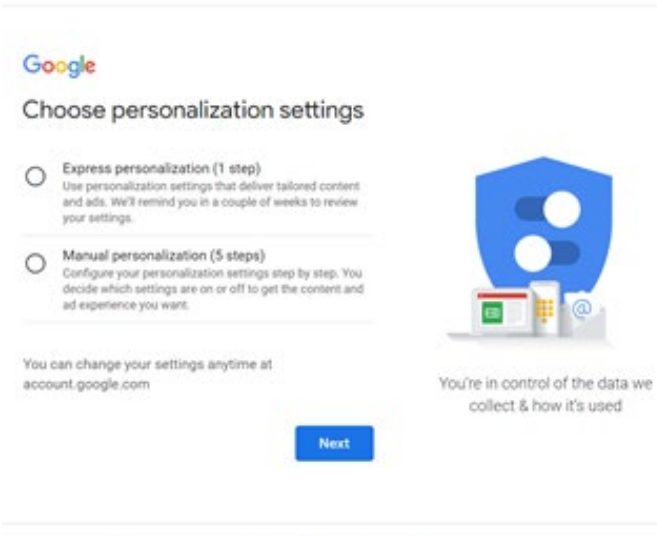
4. You then need to supply a bit more personal information, including your phone number, date of birth and gender. Don't worry, Google won't store this information. They use it to make sure there are age-appropriate settings on email accounts. To find out more about why Google is asking you for this personal information, click on 'Why we ask for this information'.

There is also an optional box on this page for you to enter a 'Recovery email address'. As you don't yet have an email account already, you can leave this blank.



The screenshot shows the Google account creation page. At the top, it says "Google" and "Sam, welcome to Google" with the email address "samsmithson1465@gmail.com". There is a field for a phone number (optional) with a dropdown for country code. Below it, a note states: "Google will use this number only for account security. Your number won't be visible to others. You can choose later whether to use it for other purposes." There is a field for a recovery email address (optional) with a note: "We'll use it to keep your account secure". Below that are fields for birthdate: "Month", "Day", and "Year", with a note "Your birthday". At the bottom is a "Gender" dropdown menu. To the right, there is an illustration of a shield with a padlock, a laptop, and a smartphone, with the text "Your personal info is private & safe".

5. Google will then ask you to choose the personalisation settings on your account. This is the level of privacy on your account.



The screenshot shows the Google account creation page for choosing personalization settings. At the top, it says "Google" and "Choose personalization settings". There are two radio button options: "Express personalization (1 step)" with the description "Use personalization settings that deliver tailored content and ads. We'll remind you in a couple of weeks to review your settings." and "Manual personalization (5 steps)" with the description "Configure your personalization settings step by step. You decide which settings are on or off to get the content and ad experience you want." Below the options, it says "You can change your settings anytime at account.google.com". At the bottom right, there is a blue "Next" button. To the right of the options, there is an illustration of a shield with two circles, a laptop, and a smartphone, with the text "You're in control of the data we collect & how it's used".

## 6. Using Gmail

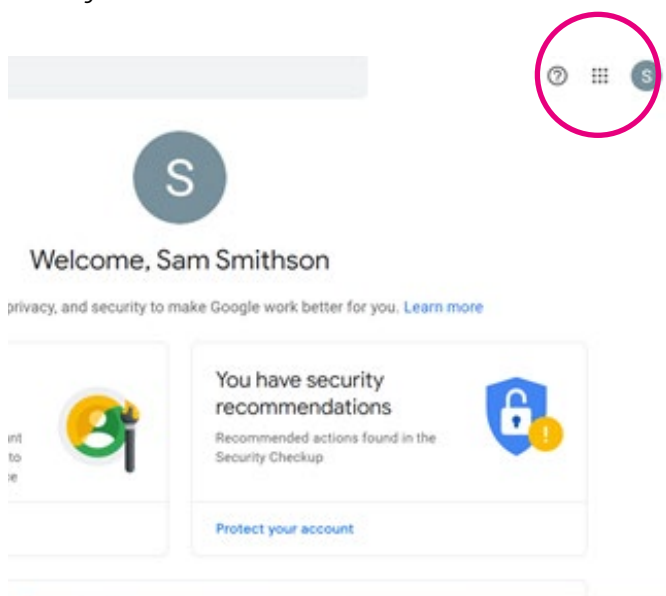
If you are happy for Google to link your new email account with your other online activity and YouTube account (if you have one), click option 1 'Express personalization'. This means Google will send you personalised adverts and information based on all your web browsing activity.

If you'd like to keep your new email account separate from your other online activity, click on option 2 'Manual personalization' and work your way through the five steps. This might sound a bit complicated but it's a straightforward process and Google guides you through each step.

You'll then be asked to agree to Gmail's Privacy and Terms. If you are happy to do so, click 'I agree'. You will need to agree to them to be able to set up a Gmail account.

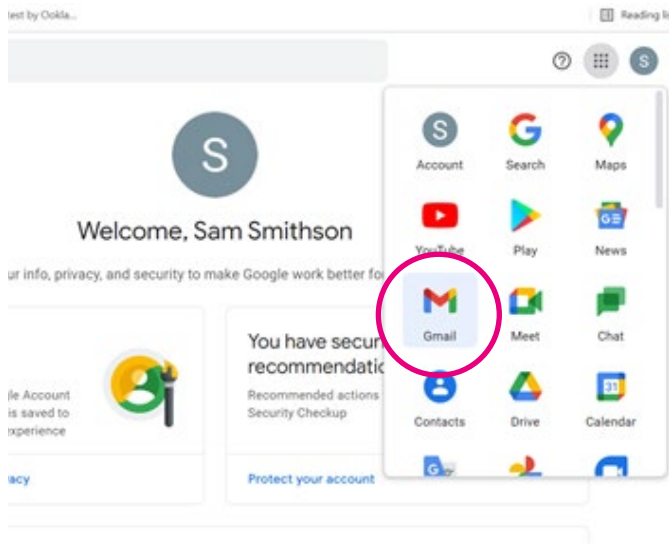
You have now set up your Google account.

6. To access Gmail, click on the square of nine dots in the top right-hand corner of your screen.



## 6. Using Gmail

7. This will display a drop-down of all the apps now available to you with Google. See below. Click on Gmail.



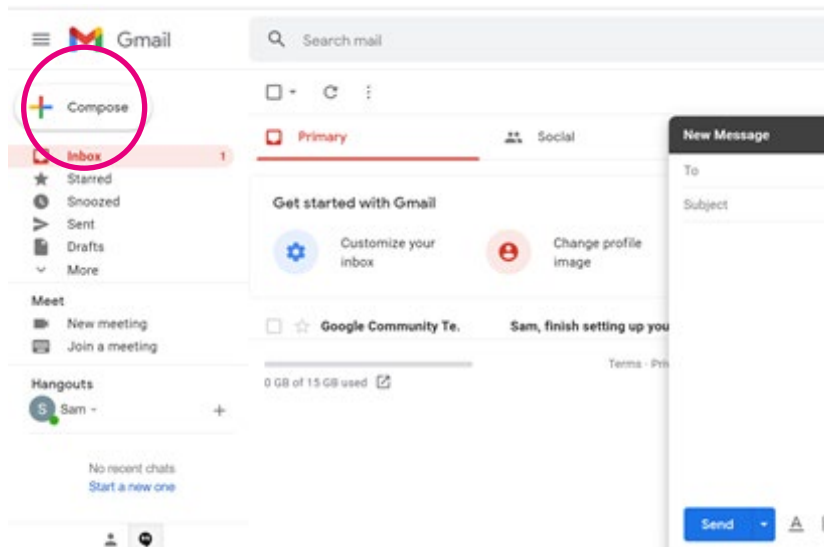
8. When you click on Gmail, you'll see a pop-up box asking if you'd like to enable 'smart features' on your email account. Smart features give you a range of tools to use to help you automate emails and carry out filing. To keep things simple while you get started, we suggest turning off smart features for now.

Once you do this, you should now see your inbox and will be ready to write your first email.

## 6. Using Gmail

### Sending your first email

1. To send your first email from your Gmail account, click on 'Compose' in the top left corner of your screen. This has a colourful 'plus' symbol on it. A 'New Message' box will then pop up.



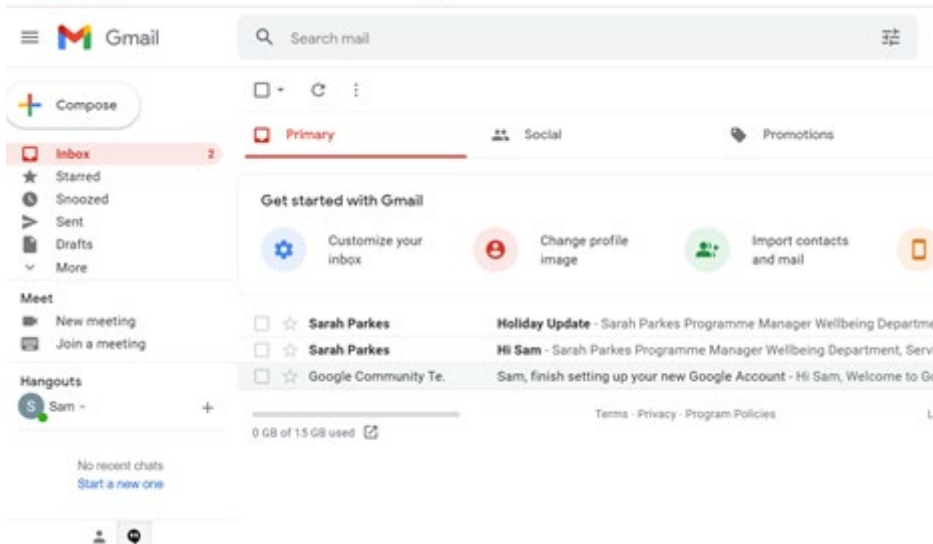
2. Type the email address of the person you want to write to in the 'To' box at the top.
3. Below this, type a few words in the 'Subject' box. The subject is a short summary or title of what your email is about, for example 'Holiday update'.
4. Type your main email message in the largest box.
5. When you are happy with your message, click the blue 'Send' button and your message will be sent to your recipient.

### Receiving emails

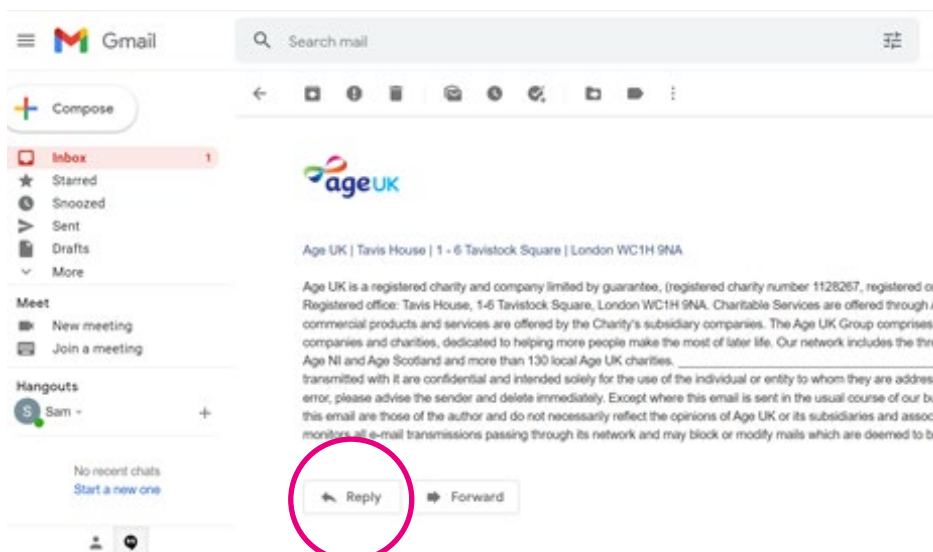
1. To receive emails, you'll need to share your new email address with the people you want to hear from. Or you can send them an email first and they can reply to it using your email address.
2. To see if you've received an email, go to [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com) on your web browser. You may be asked to log in to your account again. If so, insert your username and password.

## 6. Using Gmail

Your Gmail inbox will then open and any new messages you've received will be displayed in bold font.



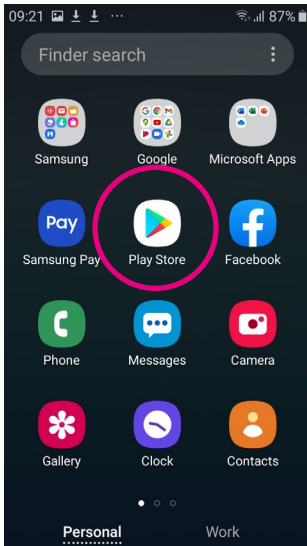
3. Your inbox will be the first folder at the top and will indicate the number of new emails you have. For example, if you have two new emails it will say '2' next to 'Inbox'.
4. To read your new message, simply move your cursor over the message text and click on it. The message will then open up for you to read it.
5. To reply, simply click the 'reply' button at the bottom of the message and then type and send your response.



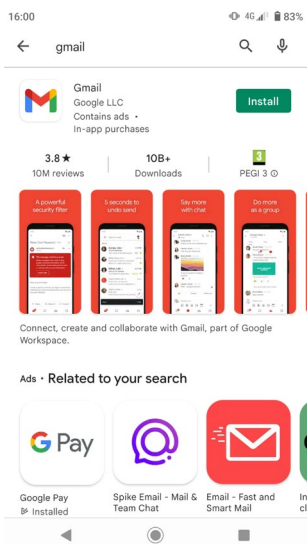
## 6. Using Gmail

### Downloading Gmail on an Android phone or tablet

1. Open the Play Store in your phone or tablet's menu by tapping on the Play Store icon.



2. First, you'll need to log in to your Google account that you've already set up.
3. Search for 'Gmail' by typing it into the search bar at the top of your screen.



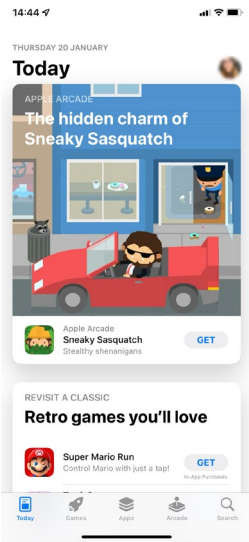
4. When you see it in the list that comes up, tap on the name of the app – Gmail.
5. Tap 'Install', which is a green button underneath the Gmail icon.

## 6. Using Gmail

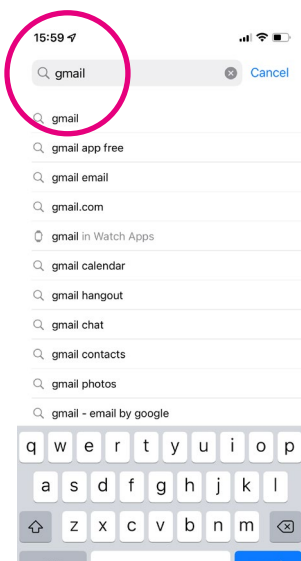
6. Gmail will download and automatically be added to your menu. If you've got a lot of apps already, you may run out of room for new icons. You'll need to 'swipe' across the screen to see the new Gmail icon.

### Downloading Gmail on an iPhone or iPad

1. Open the App Store in your iPhone or iPad's menu by tapping on the App Store icon.

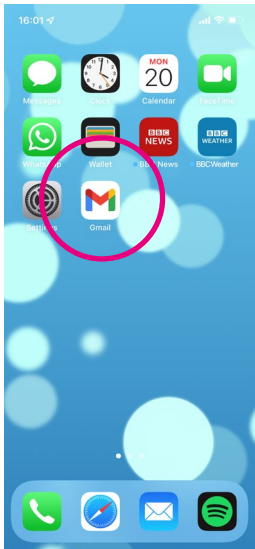


2. You'll need to set up an Apple ID or login to your existing Apple ID account. This is the account you will use to access Apple services.
3. Click the 'Search' icon at the bottom right of the screen. It has a magnifying glass icon. Search for 'Gmail' by typing in the search bar.



## 6. Using Gmail

4. Tap on 'Gmail'.
5. Tap 'Get' which is a blue button next to the icon symbol.
6. Gmail will download and automatically be added to your menu. If you have a lot of apps in your menu, you may run out of room for new icons, and you'll need to 'swipe' across the page to see the new icon.



### Using the Gmail app on a tablet or smartphone

The easiest way to access Gmail on your phone or tablet is through the Gmail app that sits on the home screen of your device. Here are some brief instructions on how to download and use the app.

1. Most Android phones and tablets will have the Gmail app automatically downloaded onto them. If not, go to the Play store, search for 'Gmail' and download it.

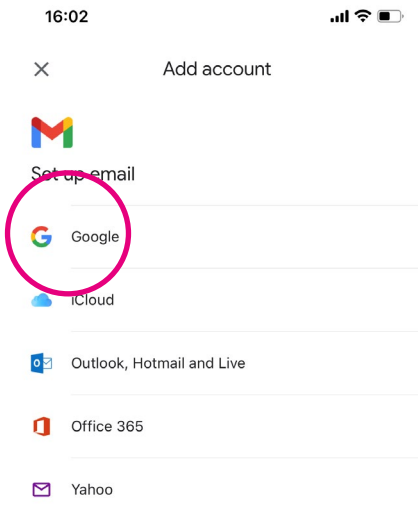
Likewise, if you have an Apple iPad or iPhone you will need to download the app from the App Store. Search 'Gmail' and then select and download it.



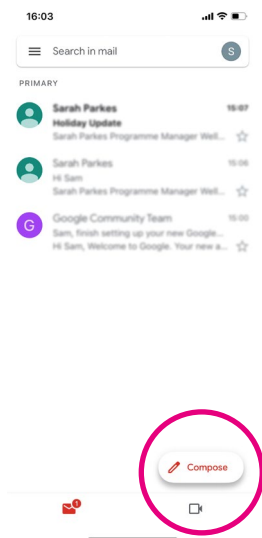
## 6. Using Gmail

2. Once the app is downloaded to your home screen, open it and tap 'Sign in'.

You will then be given the option to add your email account. As you have already set up a Gmail account in your web browser, select 'Google' and enter your username and password where prompted.



3. This will then open the app on your tablet or smartphone. As you will see, the layout of your email account is slightly different in the Gmail app than on your browser but hopefully it won't be too tricky to pick up as you familiarise yourself with it.
4. To write a new email, tap 'Compose' in the bottom right of the screen and follow the steps on [page 20](#). The 'Compose' button is white with red writing.



We will go into more detail on using the Gmail app in our intermediate guide to email.

# 7. Using Outlook

## 7. Using Outlook

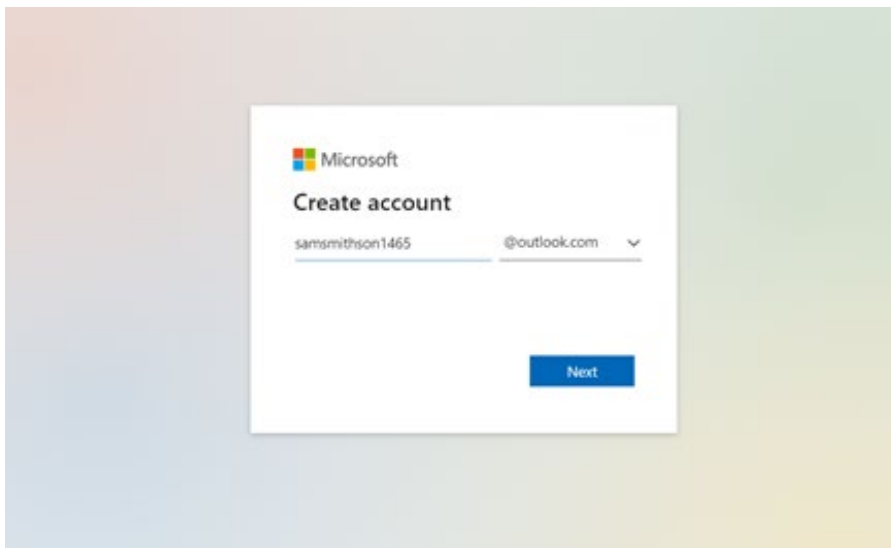
### What equipment do I need?

- You'll need a laptop, computer, tablet or smartphone.
- You'll also need an internet connection.

### Setting up your Outlook account

1. Go to your web browser (for example, Microsoft Edge, Safari or Google Chrome) and in the search bar type **www.outlook.com**. Click on the top link which should say 'Outlook – free personal email and calendar from Microsoft'. This will take you to the Microsoft Outlook home page. From there, click on 'Create free account'.
2. You then need to create an email address. This is usually your name but if your name is already in use by somebody else, you can add a number or special character after your name. For example, joe.bloggs12@outlook.com. Or you can choose something else that's memorable to you and that you'd be happy to share with others.

Once you have chosen your email address, click the 'Next' button.



3. On the next screen you'll be asked to create a password. This should be something unique and memorable to you. See our tips for choosing a password on **page 36**.

If you want to double check the password you have entered, tick the 'Show password' box.

4. You will also be asked if you would like information, tips and offers about Microsoft products and services. If you tick this box, Microsoft will add you to its mailing list and send you emails from time to time. If you'd prefer not to receive these emails, leave this box blank.
5. At this stage, you will also be asked to review the 'Microsoft Services agreement' and its 'Privacy and cookies statement'. You can click on both of these links and make sure you are happy with the terms. These links will open in new browser windows.

If you are happy, return to the 'Create a password' page and click 'Next'.

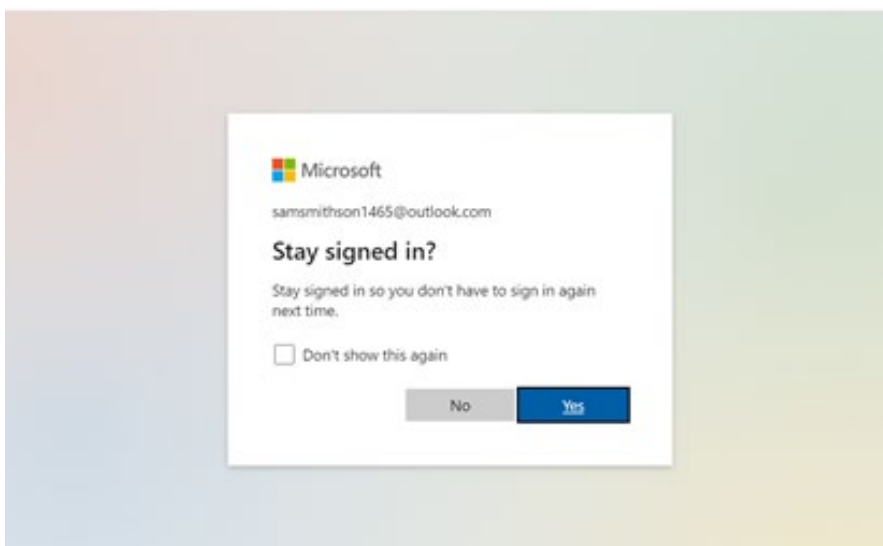
## 7. Using Outlook

- Microsoft will then ask you to input a few more details before creating an account. This includes your name and date of birth.
- You then need to complete a short puzzle to prove a human user is submitting the form. Microsoft asks you to do this to prove you're not an internet bot, a type of a computer program that performs automated tasks and can be used to hack or spam websites. Do this and click 'Done'.



- You'll then be asked whether or not you'd like to be kept signed in on your device. This means you don't have to enter your email address and password every time you want to access your email.

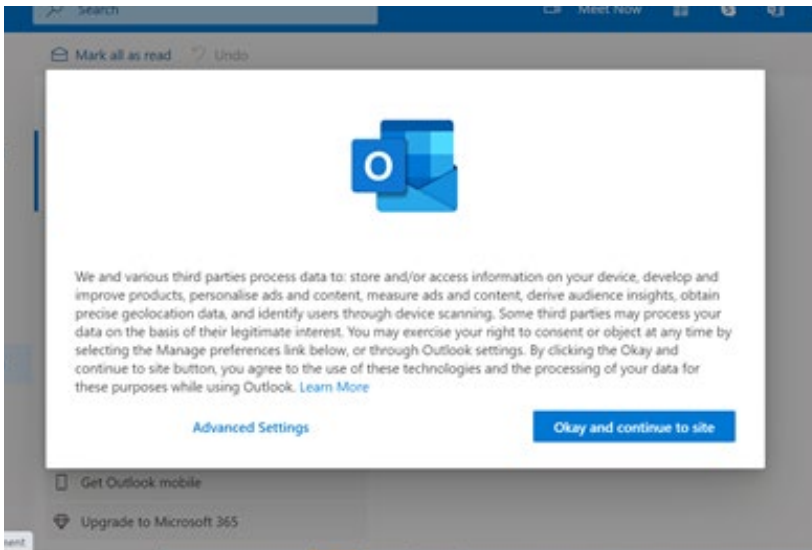
If you're using your own device and no one else has access to it, click 'Yes'. If you are using a public computer, for example at a library or community centre, click 'No'. This means no one else can access your email account.



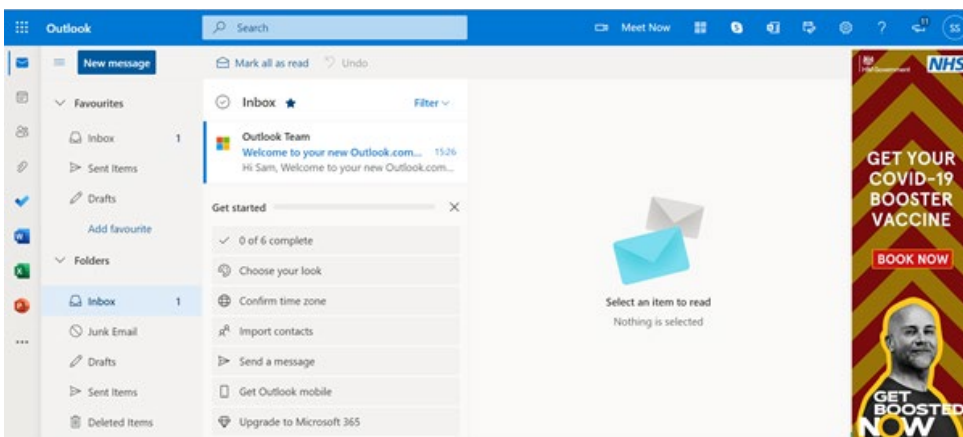
## 7. Using Outlook

- The final stage of sign up is to confirm whether you are happy for Microsoft to share some of your information with third parties. This is when they share details like your name and email address with other businesses and organisations that you don't have a direct relationship with. You can choose to click 'Okay and continue to site'.

Or, if you don't want to share any of your data, go to 'Advanced settings', scroll down to 'Legitimate interest purposes' and switch the button from 'On' to 'Off'. Then press 'Save' and close the pop-up box by clicking the X in the top right corner.



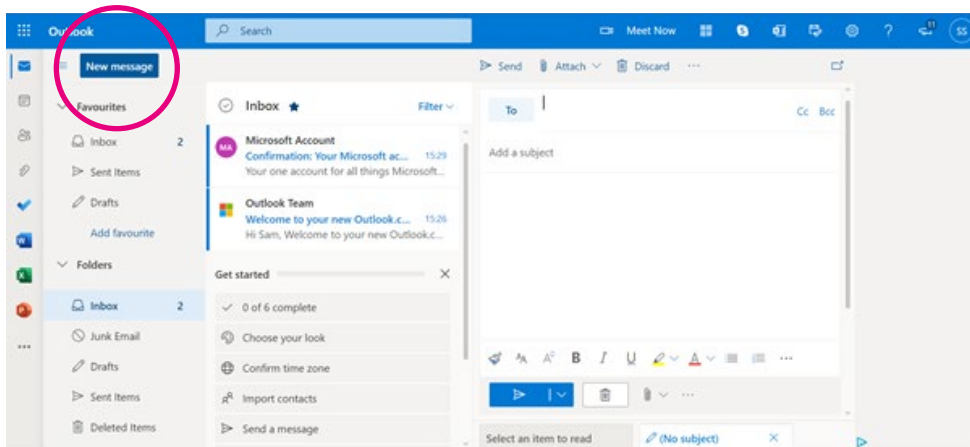
- You have now set up your Outlook email account and should see a home screen like this:



## 7. Using Outlook

### Sending your first email

1. To send your first email from your Outlook account, click on 'New message' in the top left corner of your screen. A message box will then appear on your screen.



2. Type the email address of the person you want to talk to in the 'To' box at the top.
3. Below this, type a few words in the 'Add a subject' box. The subject is a short summary or title of what your email is about, for example 'Holiday update'.
4. Type your main email message in the largest box.
5. When you are happy with your message, click the blue 'Send button' below the message and your message will be sent to your recipient.

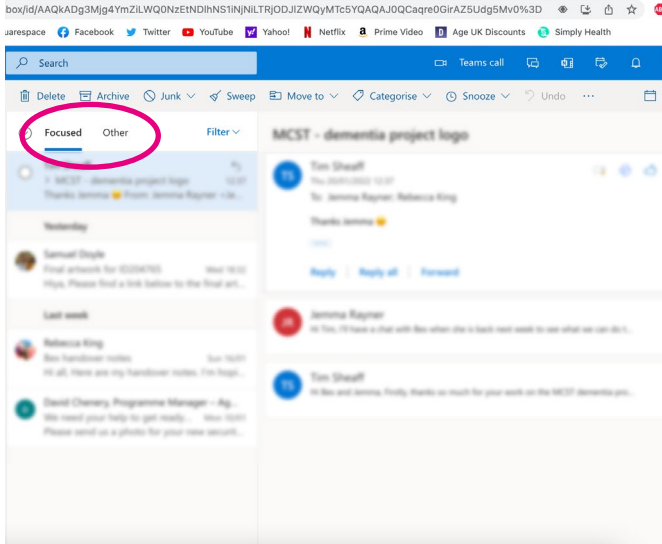
### Receiving emails

1. To receive emails, you'll need to share your new email address with the people you want to hear from. Or you can send them an email first and they can reply to it using your email address.
2. To see if you've received an email, go to [www.outlook.com](http://www.outlook.com) on your web browser. You may be asked to log in to your account again. If so, insert your username and password. This will take you to your inbox.
3. You can see if you have any new mail by looking at the left-hand column. Your inbox will be the first folder at the top and will indicate the number of new emails you have. For example, if you have two new emails it will say '2' next to 'Inbox'.

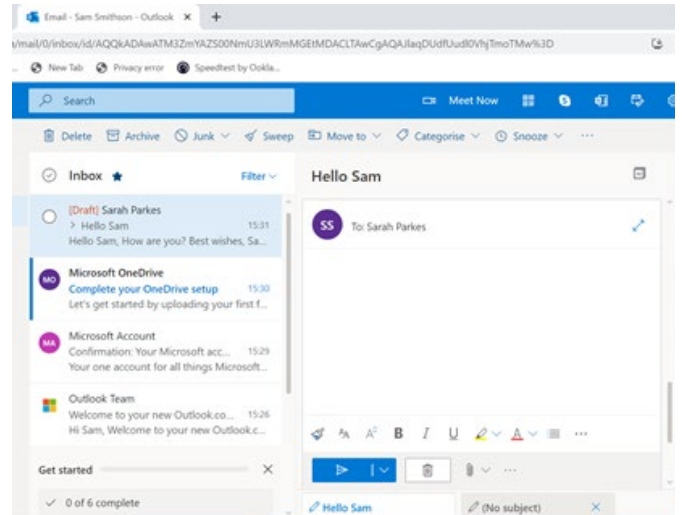
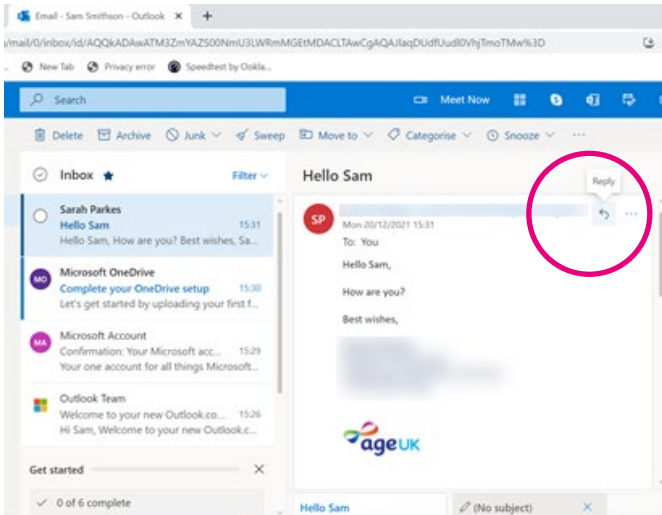
Outlook arranges your inbox (new mail) into two sub-folders: 'Focused' and 'Other'. 'Focused' emails are your important messages sent directly to you by individuals and organisations you have shared your email address with. 'Other' emails are everything else you get sent.

## 7. Using Outlook

To switch between 'Focused' and 'Other', use the tabs at the top of the column in your inbox.



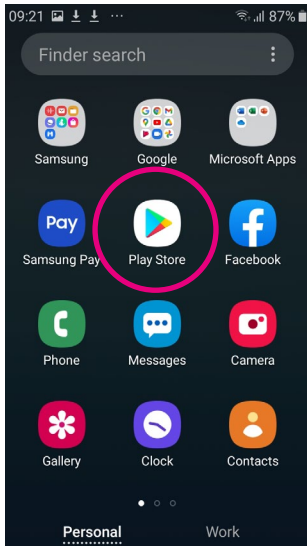
4. New emails will be the ones in bold text. To read them, scroll over the message text and click on it. The message will open for you to read it.
5. To reply, click the reply button at the bottom of the message, and then type and send your response.



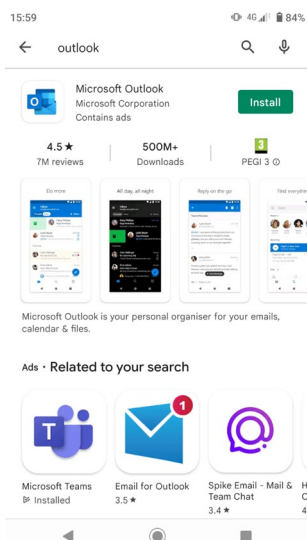
## 7. Using Outlook

### Downloading Outlook on an Android phone or tablet

1. Open the Play Store in your phone or tablet's menu by tapping on the Play Store icon.



2. First, you'll need to log in to your Google account that you've set up. This is the account you will use to access Google services, like Gmail.
3. Search for 'Outlook' by typing it into the search bar at the top of your screen.



4. When you see it in the list that comes up, tap on the name of the app – 'Microsoft Outlook'.
5. Tap 'Install', which is a green button underneath the Outlook icon.

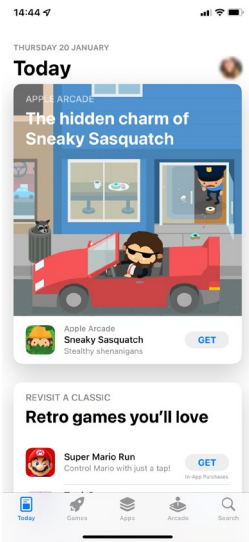


## 7. Using Outlook

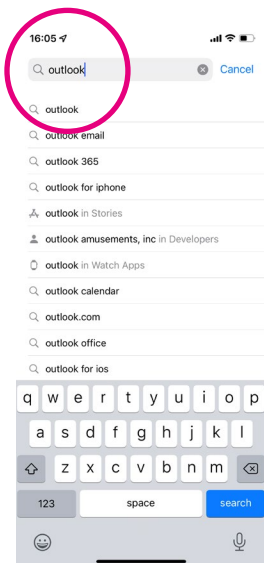
- Outlook will download and automatically be added to your menu. If you've got a lot of apps already, you may run out of room for new icons. You'll need to 'swipe' across the screen to see the new Outlook icon.

### Downloading Outlook on an iPhone or iPad

- Open the App Store in your iPhone or iPad's menu by tapping on the App Store icon.

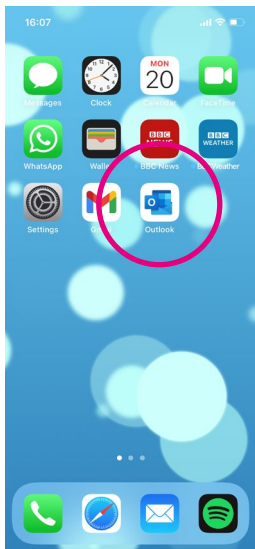


- You'll need to set up an Apple ID or login to your existing Apple ID account. This is the account you will use to access Apple services. Please refer to our 'Beginner's guide to apps' which covers how to reset your password for your App Store account.
- Click the 'Search' icon at the bottom right of the screen. It has a magnifying glass icon. Search for 'Outlook' by typing in the search bar.



## 7. Using Outlook

4. Tap on 'Microsoft Outlook'.
5. Tap 'Get' which is a blue button next to the icon symbol.
6. Outlook will download and automatically be added to your menu. If you have a lot of apps in your menu, you may run out of room for new icons, and you'll need to 'swipe' across the page to see the new icon.



### Using the Outlook app on a tablet or smartphone

The easiest way to access your Outlook email account on your phone or tablet is through the Outlook app that sits on the home screen of your device. Here are some brief instructions on how to download and use the app.

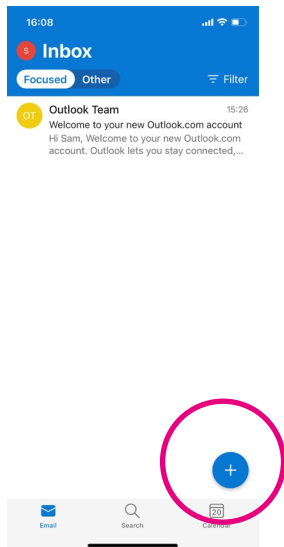
1. To download the Microsoft Outlook app to your phone, go to Google Play or the Apple App Store and search for 'Outlook'.
2. A number of different Microsoft apps will appear. The one you want is called 'Microsoft Outlook'. It is free and you should be able to select and download it to your device.
3. Once the app is downloaded to your home screen, open it and tap 'Get started'.
4. You'll be asked to add an account. Enter your email address and password. Tap 'Sign in'.
5. You then might be asked if you'd like to add another email account. Ignore this and choose 'Skip'.
6. Your Outlook inbox should now open. The layout of your email account is slightly different in the Outlook app than on your browser but hopefully it won't be too tricky to pick up as you familiarise yourself with it.

## 7. Using Outlook

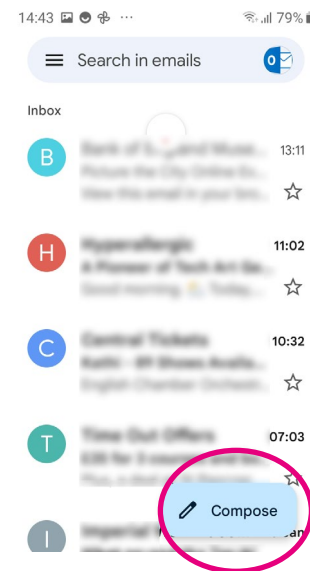
You should clearly see your inbox labelled with both the 'Focused' and 'Other' tabs. To view your emails in each folder, simply click on the folder you'd like to view.

7. To write a new email, click on the blue circle button in the bottom right of the screen and follow the steps on [page 30](#). Depending on what device you're using, the button may have a '+' on it or an email symbol. See below:

On iPhone:



On Android:



**We will go into more detail about using the Outlook app in our intermediate guide to email.**

# 8. Tips on choosing a password

## 8. Tips on choosing a password

The best way to keep your email account safe is to choose a strong password that only you have access to.

Avoid using anything obvious for your password, like your name or address or choosing a weak password like '12345' that someone else might easily guess. The National Cyber Security Centre recommends you use three random words as your password, for example, 'cupwalldog' or 'raincowbox'.

It can be tempting to want to use the same password for multiple different websites but it's better to have a different password for each one. This makes it much harder for people to access your personal information online.

Never write down your password. If you need a written reminder, try to write a hint that only you understand, rather than the actual password. If you do write anything down, keep that information somewhere safe and away from the device you use to email.

Remember never to share your email password with anyone. No legitimate business or organisation will ever ask you to share a password for your email online or over the phone. Learning at your own pace

### Next Steps

Once you feel comfortable setting up your email account in Gmail or Outlook, read our intermediate guide to learn how to:

- set up email notifications
- reply to an email
- upload an attachment to an email, like a photo or a document
- create folders and organise your emails
- recognise spam and junk emails.

We hope you've enjoyed working your way through this guide and can now confidently write an email and send it.

### **My Age UK Digital Champion**

Telephone number:

### **Notes**

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

**Age UK Advice: 0800 678 1602**

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

You can find more information at **[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**