Searches in Gmail

Finding messages in Gmail

With hundreds of messages in your mailbox, finding the "right one" can be challenging. In the search box at the top of your Gmail window, you can simply type the name of the sender or a word from the subject (or within the document or attachments).

You can also refine your search by clicking the arrow in the search box:

Below are some Advanced search operators that can help you refine your process.

Advanced search

Advanced search operators are query words or symbols that perform special actions in Gmail search. These operators allow you to find what you're looking for quickly and accurately. They can also be used to set up filters so you can organize your inbox automatically. Some of the most useful operators are listed below.

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<th>Operator</th>
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| from:    | Used to specify the sender | Example: from:amy  
Meaning: Messages from Amy |
| to:      | Used to specify a recipient | Example: to:david  
Meaning: All messages that were sent to David (by you or someone else) |
| **subject:** | Search for words in the subject line | Example: **subject:dinner**  
Meaning: Messages that have the word "dinner" in the subject |
|---|---|---|
| **OR** | Search for messages matching term A or term B*  
*OR must be in all caps | Example: **from:amy OR from:david**  
Meaning: Messages from Amy or from David |
| **-** (hyphen) | Used to exclude messages from your search | Example: **dinner -movie**  
Meaning: Messages that contain the word "dinner" but do not contain the word "movie" |
| **label:** | Search for messages by label | Example: **from:amy label:friends**  
Meaning: Messages from Amy that have the label "friends"  
**from:david label:my-family**  
Meaning: Messages from David that have the label "My Family" |
| **has:attachment** | Search for messages with an attachment | Example: **from:david has:attachment**  
Meaning: Messages from David that have an attachment |
| **list:** | Search for messages on mailing lists | Example: **list:info@example.com**  
Meaning: Messages with the words info@example.com in the headers, sent to or from this list |
| **filename:** | Search for an attachment by name or type | Example: **filename:physicshomework.txt**  
Meaning: Messages with an attachment named "physicshomework.txt"  
**label:work filename:pdf**  
Meaning: Messages labeled "work" that also have a PDF file as an attachment |
| **" "** (quotes) | Used to search for an exact phrase*  
*Capitalization isn't taken into consideration | Example: **"I'm feeling lucky"**  
Meaning: Messages containing the phrase "I'm feeling lucky" or "I'm feeling lucky"  
**subject:"dinner and a movie"**  
Meaning: Messages containing the phrase "dinner and a movie" in the subject |
| **()** | Used to group words  
Used to specify terms that shouldn't be excluded | Example: **from:amy (dinner OR movie)**  
Meaning: Messages from Amy that contain either the word "dinner" or the word "movie"  
**subject:(dinner movie)**  
Meaning: Messages in which the subject contains both the word "dinner" and the word "movie" |
| **in:** | Search for messages anywhere in Gmail*  
*Messages in Spam and Trash are excluded from searches by default | Example: **in:where movie**  
Meaning: Messages in All Mail, Spam, and Trash that contain the word "movie" |
| **in:inbox** **in:trash** **in:spam** | Search for messages in Inbox, Trash, or Spam | Example: **in:trash from:amy**  
Meaning: Messages from Amy that are inTrash |
| **is:** **is:important label:** **is:starred** **is:unread** **is:read** | Search within messages that Priority Inbox considers important.  
Search for messages that are starred, unread, or read | Example: **is:important from:janet**  
Meaning: Messages from Janet that were marked as important by Priority Inbox  
**is:read is:starred from:David**  
Meaning: Messages from David that have been read and are marked with a star |
| has: | yellow-star
has:red-star
has: orange-star
has:green-star
has:blue-star
has: purple-star
has:red-bang
has: orange-guillemet
has: yellow-bang
has:green-check
has:blue-info
has: purple-question |
|---|---|
| Search for messages with a particular star | Example: **has:purple-star from:David**
Meaning: Messages from David that are marked with a purple star |
| cc: | bcc: |
| Used to specify recipients in the cc: or bcc: fields* | Example: **cc:david**
Meaning: Messages that were cc-ed to David |
| after: | before: |
| Search for messages sent or received during a certain period of time (using the date format yyyy/mm/dd) | Example: **after:2004/04/16 before:2004/04/18**
Meaning: Messages sent between April 16, 2004 and April 18, 2004.*
*More precisely: Messages sent after 12:00 AM (or 00:00) April 16, 2004 and before April 18, 2004. |
| older_than | newer_than |
| Similar to older and newer, but allows relative dates using d, m, and y for day, month, and year | Example: **newer_than:2d**
Meaning: Finds messages sent within the last two days. |
| is:chat | Search for chat messages | Example: **is:chat monkey**
Meaning: Any chat message including the word "monkey." |
| deliveredto: | Search for messages within a particular email address in the Delivered-To line of the message header | Example: **deliveredto:username@gmail.com**
Meaning: Any message with username@gmail.com in the Delivered-To: field of the message header (which can help you find messages forwarded from another account or ones sent to an alias). |
| circle: | Search for messages that were sent from someone who you added to a particular Google+ circle | Example: **circle:friends**
Meaning: Any message that was sent by a person in your "Friends" circle.
Examples: **circle:"soccer friends (team blue)"** or **circle:"my fab four"***
Notes: For circle names that include a space, parentheses, curly brackets, or vertical bar, add quotes around the name. For names that include quotes, add a back slash immediately before the quotes. |
| has:circle | Search for all messages that were sent from someone who you added to your Google+ circles | Example: **has:circle**
Meaning: Any message that was sent by a person in any of your circles. |
| category: | Search for messages within a category | Example: **category:updates**
Meaning: All messages in the Updates category.  
Example: **category:social Mindy**
Meaning: Messages in the Social category that include "Mindy." |
| size: | Search for messages larger than the specified size in bytes | Example: **size:1000000**
Meaning: All messages larger than 1MB (1,000,000 bytes) in size. |
| larger: | smaller: | Similar to size: but allows abbreviations for numbers | Example: **larger:10M**
Meaning: All messages of at least 10M bytes (10,000,000 bytes) in size. |
### Boolean operators

You can use boolean operators such as ‘OR’ when searching in Gmail.

For example, to look for messages from user@example.com and messages that contain the subject line ‘Meeting reminder’, you can enter ‘user@example.com OR meeting reminder’ in your Gmail search box.

Using these along with Gmail’s advanced operators can be a great way of making your search criteria more powerful.

The ‘or’ function in Gmail is represented by ‘OR,’ and the ‘not’ function is represented by a minus (-). You also can use quotes (" ") to specify an exact phrase.