

# Gmail Filters and Labels - Organize and Simplify your inbox.

[filters&labels](#)

[filters&labels668x714 37.4 KB](#)

## Gmail Filters and Labels

Let's face it... Email is annoying. We all send messages to locations, and we expect for them to be read by the recipients, but we also receive messages through the same platform, and honestly, responding can be a pain! You have all of the junk email, spam, phishing attempts, random reply-alls that should only have ever been a reply, and list serves full of people that ask the same question in six different threads at the same time. What a mess!!!

While I can't promise you that filters and labels will fix all of this, I can promise that setting the up allows for your important things, or similar messages, to be categorized and easy to distinguish from the rest of the cluster.

Let's break down the process...

### Finding a pattern

To begin, we have to find a way to distinguish our target emails from other messages. Think of this like a search term in Google. We want a way to get the emails we need to act on and ONLY those emails.

Sometimes this is super easy, let's use a mailing list as an example... Let's say that all of your "How To Be a Master Educator" messages come from [list@awesome-educator.com](mailto:list@awesome-educator.com). It is probably a pretty safe bet that you can use that email address sender as your pattern. It isn't going to accidentally return messages you don't want to include.

So, that's cool, but sometimes it is a little more complicated. In this example, we will look at emails coming from DocFlow, the system we use for registration and various other campus forms. If you are someone who receives messages from DocFlow, you may get several, and these emails will usually indicate different tasks and different overall workflow purposes. All of these emails come from the sender [docflow@wftigers.org](mailto:docflow@wftigers.org), so if we create a filter using just that email, all of our workflows will be combined into a single label. That means that, depending on who you are, job applications, purchase order notices, facility requests, and other various things would all go to the same filter. That's probably not what you want. In these sorts of situations, we need to look at the subject or the body of the message to find common patterns. In this example, we will look at the Kindergarten Roundup form. A message from this form will include the following:

“ Sender: [docflow@wftigers.org](mailto:docflow@wftigers.org)  
Subject: New Round-Up Submission - Student Name

Sometimes we might have to look at the body of the message, but, for our use case, the subject and sender will be enough. We can look for any email coming from that email address with a subject containing “New Round-Up Submission.” I'll ignore the hyphen to avoid any weirdness with special characters that MIGHT happen. This should be totally sufficient to catch what we want, and nothing more.

## Creating a filter

Now that we have a grasp on finding patterns, let's create a filter using that pattern. I'll keep using the DocFlow example of Round-Up.

1. In Gmail, click on the little advanced search button.

[image](#)

[image972×80 5.31 KB](#)

2. This will open the advanced search pane, and we will be able to use any combination of these items to create our filter. I'll use the pattern options we defined above to fill out the form. I'll ignore the date options for now.

[image](#)

[image722×486 21.3 KB](#)

3. At this point, I'll click on “Create filter.”

[image](#)

[image725×493 24.3 KB](#)

4. This will open the filter pane, and it provides us with several options that we will go over in the next section...

[image](#)

[image728×624 40.7 KB](#)

## Choosing Actions

We understand finding patterns, and we know how to turn those patterns into a filter. Now, let's look at the actions available to us in the filter pane to get the most out of our understanding.

[image](#)

[image722×578 49.1 KB](#)

1. This is going to be used very often. What it means, when used by itself, is that you will not see your email within your inbox, ever, it will automatically act as if you hit the archive button within the message. Most of the time, though, you will use this will labels, meaning that the message will ONLY go to the label and will entirely "skip the inbox."
2. This will automatically mark the message the same as if you had opened it. I don't ever use this one, but I'm sure someone has a good use of it!
3. The star option is like a favorites function for your email. It is a sort of quick label, and all of the matching messages will go into this same area. Again, I don't use this, but it might be good as a sort of "I'm currently working on" type of organization method.
4. This is the magic one, or at least, this is the one we will primarily focus on. A label can be thought of as a folder of sorts. They can be nested (one inside of another), and they can be named whatever you want. If you already have a label you want to use, you will be able to choose it by clicking on "Choose label." If you need to create one, clicking on "Choose label" will allow you to create a new one as well.
5. This is something that I do use, but might not be helpful to everyone. This is good for when pesky vendors won't send invoices to the accounting email instead of to me.
6. This is a full delete, not an archive. You should really only use this on rare occasions unless it is part of a bigger workflow that would be beyond the scope of this tip.
7. Do you ever get emails from somewhere you know is legit, but it keeps going to your spam? This is the option you would use for that circumstance!
8. Templates are cool, but they are also beyond the scope of this tip.
9. Selecting this action will make your email stand out by activating the little chevron dude next to the email. [image](#)
10. This does the opposite of the one above.
11. This is like the automated version of labels, and I never use them. This will let you put an email into either "Social," "Updates," "Forums," or "Promotions," the default list of

categories within Gmail.

12. This is why we ignored the date options in the prior step. Checking this box will apply the filter to all of the past conversations (message threads) in the past, as long as they meet the filter. It gives you a handy count of the conversations that will have the filter applied also!

## Labels and Organization

Now that we understand our action options, let's go ahead with building the Round-Up filter.

1. Select "Skip the inbox (Archive it)."

[image](#)

[image724×608 41.8 KB](#)

2. Select "Apply the label"

[image](#)

[image728×608 43.2 KB](#)

3. We don't already have a Round-Up label, so we need to make one. click on "Choose label..."

[image](#)

[image728×618 42.2 KB](#)

4. Click on "New label..."

[image](#)

[image722×616 49.7 KB](#)

5. I'll enter "Round-Up Forms" (or whatever) in the label name. If you want to nest the label under another one, you can check the box and choose some already existing labels.

[image](#)

6. Click on the "Create" button.

7. We are all set, so now click on "Create filter"

[image](#)

[image726×623 42.5 KB](#)

At this point, we should now see the label listed on the left.

[image](#)

That label shows as not having any unread messages. When you get a new message, the label will be brighter, and it will also have a number to the right.

image

We can also go further by color coding our labels. To do that, hover to click on the three dots, choose “Label color,” then choose the color you want.

## Wrapping Up

That’s it! Hopefully you can see how handy this feature is. And we really only scratched the surface. Do some experimenting, and maybe even look into the featured called “Multiple inbox sections.” you can use this to accomplish something like this screenshot, where each of the areas on the right (you pick the name and amount you want) automatically show the messages with the label of your choosing.

image

[image1521×1093 71.1 KB](#)

---

Revision #1

Created 2025-07-01 14:32:49 UTC by Dustin Faust

Updated 2025-07-01 14:36:56 UTC by Dustin Faust