Getting Started with Gmail

Setting up and using a Gmail account
to send and receive email.

Gmail is an email service offered by Google, and you can set up an account for free.

Google can offer the Gmail service because it shows you advertisements when you check your mail on the web. Unlike some other free email services, it doesn't include ads in the emails you send.

The advertisements are based upon words that the computer at Google finds in the email you are reading. No person is directly involved, but it can be a little disconcerting to see an ad so related to your personal email.

Visit http://www.gmail.com to set up a Gmail account. No personal information is required except for your name and birthdate and the answer to a security question.

Start by clicking on the "Pick a Name" button. Then type in your name (first then last), and your choice of Gmail address, and then click on "check availability". Gmail will tell you if that address is available and will make some suggestions if it isn't.

Unlike other email systems, Gmail ignores dots in the email address – so if you sign up for marathonrunner@gmail, you can also tell people that marathon.runner@gmail.com or mara.thon.runner@gmail.com is your email address - they will all work for the same account.

Be sure to correctly type in a password of your choice twice. Using both letters and numbers makes a more secure password.

After filling out the rest of the form (including your security question, *write down everything you have typed in before you proceed to the next page.*

When you go to the next page, Gmail will show you some information about how Gmail works and what makes it special, and then you can proceed to the main mail page.

Gmail is a little different from other email programs in that it stores all of the mail in one big bucket (actually two, the Inbox and the Archive). You can't create additional folders.

Gmail lets you search for content of emails, and who sent them, and it also allows you to add labels to emails so that you can categorize them.

Send an email to yourself to try out GMail. Select "Compose Mail" under the Gmail logo in the upper left. Type your new Gmail addresss into the TO field and a

subject like "Test Email" into the subject line. Say hello to yourself in the body of the message, mention that you are trying out your new Gmail account if you like, and click on "Send" at the bottom. You'll find your email in your Inbox.

When you compose a message, "Rich Formatting" lets you apply formatting (bold, font size, colors) to the text of your message. Plain Text is less fun but is more universal. You can switch back and forth.

You can search for emails with the any specific word in them by typing that word into the search bar at the top of the Gmail page and clicking on "Search Mail". This way you can find all emails that make reference to a specific name or topic.

Categorize email messages by giving them a label. At the left-hand side of the page click on the "Edit Labels" text link. Where it says "Create a New label" type in learning   and click on the Create button. Click back to your inbox, click on the message you sent yourself, and at the top of the page select "More Actions" and apply the "learning" label to your message. Now you can always find your messages about learning by clicking on the "learning" text link at the left under the Labels heading.

You can add as many labels to each email as you like.

If you get mail regularly from people and you want Gmail to automatically label it for you, you can set up a Filter. Click on "Create a Filter" at the top of the Gmail page and go through the steps to create a filter based upon the sender or subject.

The Gmail Help button is a good source of information on many of the additional features of GMail.

Now that you have a Gmail account you can also use Google Calendars, their Documents applications, their Picasa photo program, and lots more Google features. Explore on your own to see what is available.

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