

# The Savvy Researcher

## Info Hacks

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.  
-Albert Einstein

### A) The GTD Method to Organization

Allen, David. 2001. Getting things done the art of stress-free productivity. New York: Viking.

### B) Quick Tips<sup>1</sup>

1. Collect: Get all your information into one “bucket” and empty it regularly
2. Process: Deal with each item only once, if it takes < 2 minutes, do it!
3. Organize: Keep a ‘next action’ list
4. Review: Create a ‘tickler file’—designed to help you remember what needs to be done
5. Do: Make it work for you!

### C) Quick Links

RefWorks <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/refworks/>  
Zotero <http://www.zotero.org/>  
WorldCat <http://www.worldcat.org/>  
Bloglines <http://www.bloglines.com/>  
Del.icio.us <http://del.icio.us/>  
Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/>  
Library Toolbar <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/toolbar/>  
43Folders <http://www.43folders.com/>  
Study Hacks <http://calnewport.com/blog/>

### D) Ask a Librarian

1. You can chat with us at: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/askus/>
2. Email: [reflib@library.uiuc.edu](mailto:reflib@library.uiuc.edu)
3. Phone: 217-333-2290
4. Library Hours: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/services/hours.php>

LEARN OnDemand: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/learn/ondemand/index.html>

**For more library workshops:**

<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/learn/instruction/workshops.html>

Please send your comments to [learnlib@library.uiuc.edu](mailto:learnlib@library.uiuc.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Getting\\_Things\\_Done](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Getting_Things_Done)

Wetmore, Donald E. The Productivity Handbook: New Ways of Leveraging Your Time, Information & Communications. New York: Random House, 2005.

# The Incredible Shrinking Inbox

## ⇒ Tips for Managing Your Email

- Read your email once. “The average business person receives around eighty emails a day.” (Wetmore p. 119)
- Do it or delete it. Ruthlessly delete. And use folders to store the emails that make it past the first scan, you cannot get to right now or that are not a priority.
- Watch for failed folders. Look out for “failed folders”, that is, folders that you created, but they do not reduce the complexity of your email management (p. 33). These folders can also be ruthlessly deleted.
- Archive your email on a disk or hard drive. One author asks, “If you did not read it this week, what makes you think you’ll read it the next week?” (Zeigler, p. 97). At the end of the day or week, file, delete and/or archive messages in your in-box.
- Create folders and label them according to priority rather than subject. For example, Take action, Pending, Ready reference, Meetings, Delegate, Project folders (with name for respective projects), etc.
- Avoid spam at all costs. Use Outlook’s “Rules Wizard” to block unwanted messages or to automatically move your incoming messages into the correct file. Better yet, install spam software.
- DO NOT use your in-box as a to-do list. It is analogous to having stacks of paper on your desk. It is also a visual cue to do something, which is helpful, but not necessarily efficient or organized. “The average person spends 30 minutes a day looking for email messages” (Zeigler, p. 95) Take action immediately or file it.
- Check email only once or twice a day. Impossible, you say? I know. Well, at least turn off email notification systems. Even if you do not jump to read the message when it dings, it probably broke your focus on the task at hand. Or set your email screen view to “preview” (available in Outlook and Gmail) so you can see the subject line, 2 or 3 lines from the beginning of the message. This will allow you to quickly scan messages for importance.
- Flag messages. Or use colors to code your email in Outlook. This allows you to categorize them by priority or perhaps by whom they are from (faculty, student, consortium member). If red means, “do this first” or “from my supervisor”, your eyes will be drawn to them first. The same thing can be done in Google with their labeling system.

- Enlist your calendar. Drag and drop messages into your calendar if you want to keep them for later, but don't want them to fall off your radar. This feature is available in Outlook, but you could do the same thing by opening your calendar software and cutting and pasting the email into the day you want to work on it.
- Batch your response time to email. Give yourself a set interval of time, like 20 or 30 minutes to look at as many messages as you can. Take action on the priority messages first. Then, close your inbox.
- Create templates for common emails. If you sent out the same email over and over (e.g., notification to faculty member that a book they requested has arrived), consider creating a template in Word. You will not have to type out the same information repeatedly and you can easily modify the text before you send it out.

### ⇒ Save Your Colleagues Time

- Creating a signature will help email recipients identify you as well as provide relevant contact information. The standard recommendation for this, however, is to keep it under 6 lines.
- Limit emails to one key topic per message. If there are too many issues or requests being made in one email, the reader may not remember what you wrote after reading it. Try to keep it short, discuss one topic, and it should be easy to understand.
- Use simple background and fonts that will display well no matter what email program the recipient is using.
- Let the subject line do the talking.
- The first few lines should communicate—Why did I get this email? What do I have to do? When do you need a response?
- If there is a deadline, say so prominently in the email.

### ⇒ Guidelines for using email rather than the phone (Zeigler, p. 97)

Email: Need only information, Provides a written backup, Some people respond faster to email, Multiple people can receive it

Phone: Need an immediate response, Need to ask questions, Want to hear someone's voice, Privacy

If you need to have a dialog, you should use the phone. Tell coworkers if they have a time-sensitive request or question - a matter of hours vs. a matter of days - they should call you instead.

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