THE PROOF SERIES

A PLAYFUL GUIDE TO TAMING YOUR INBOX

Email Proof

A senior's simple guide to taming the inbox and outsmarting every scam in it



John Marshall

PROUDLY CANADIAN



PROUDLY CANADIAN

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

By John Marshall

www.buyproof.ca

FIRST THINGS FIRST

What Email Really Is

Email is simply letters that travel at the speed of light. If you can read and write, you already know everything important — the rest is just buttons.



1. Letters, but instant — An email is a written message sent over the internet. It arrives in seconds, costs nothing, and never gets lost in the snow.

2. Everyone has an address — Like a postal address, your email address tells the internet exactly where to deliver your mail. Yours is yours alone.

3. The inbox is your mailbox — New mail lands in your "inbox." You open it, read it, and reply — or file it away, just like paper.

4. Nothing to fear — You cannot break email by reading it. Clicking, reading, and looking are all completely safe. Sending is the only part to do thoughtfully.

TALE

E STORY

When Ethel, 86, got her first email, she replied by writing a letter, stamping it, and mailing it to the help desk.

"It said 'reply,'" she explained. "Nobody said where." She now replies with one tap, and laughs every time.

!

Email is free, instant, and unlimited. A letter that took five days now takes five seconds — and you can send photos along for the ride.

Take care: Reading email is always safe. The danger — small and manageable — lives only in clicking links and opening attachments from strangers.

READ THE LABEL

Your Address, Piece by Piece

Every email address has the same three-part anatomy. Once you can read one, you can read them all — including the fakes, which is a superpower.

Your name › The @ sign › The provider › The ending

1. The name part — Before the @ comes the name: often yours, like joan.smith. Dots and numbers are common; spaces are never allowed.

2. The @ sign — Pronounced “at.” It separates who from where — joan.smith AT examplemail. Every address on Earth has exactly one.

3. The provider part — After the @ comes the mail service: gmail.com, outlook.com, bell.net, shaw.ca. This is the “post office” handling your mail.

4. Spotting fakes later — Scammers imitate real addresses with tiny changes — amaz0n instead of amazon. Knowing the anatomy helps you catch them.

TALE

E STORY

Harold's email address is harold.fishes.1952@examplemail.ca.

“The fishes are because I like fishing,” he explains. “The 1952 is because I'm old enough to admit it.”

! Your address is not case-sensitive: Harold@Example.CA and harold@example.ca reach the same mailbox. Capitals are decoration.

Take care: Your email address is semi-public — fine to share with friends and shops, but never post it on public notice boards or social media.

KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND

A Tour of Your Inbox

Open your mail app and you will see the same few folders everyone has. Learn these four and you will never feel lost.

Inbox: new mail › Sent: your replies › Trash: the bin › Folders: the drawers

1. Inbox: the front hall — Where new mail arrives. Unread messages appear bold; read ones go quiet. This is your home base.

2. Sent: your outbox — Copies of everything you have sent. Handy when you think “did I actually reply to that?” — the answer is here.

3. Trash: the wastebasket — Deleted messages rest here for about 30 days before vanishing. Deleted something by mistake? Rescue it from the Trash.

4. Folders: the filing drawers — You can create your own — Family, Bills, Travel — and file messages away. Chapter 3 is all about this happy chore.

TALE

TALE STORY

Mabel treats her inbox like her front hall: “New mail on the table, answered mail in the drawer, junk straight in the bin.” Her inbox has 12 messages.

Her neighbour's has 12,000. Mabel is winning.

!

Those numbers beside folder names are unread counts, not emergencies. Email waits patiently — it is the least urgent invention ever made.

Take care: The Spam or Junk folder holds suspicious mail automatically. Peek in occasionally — real mail lands there by mistake now and then.

OPEN SESAME

Reading an Email Properly

Opening an email is the safest, simplest thing you will do today. Tap it, read it, and decide what it needs — if anything.

Tap to open › Read calmly › Check the sender › Decide: reply? file? delete?

1. Tap the message — In your inbox list, tap the subject line once. The full message opens, large and readable.

2. Check who it's from — Glance at the sender's name and address at the top. A message from your daughter should look like it's from your daughter.

3. Read at your pace — Scroll gently with one finger. Big text? Pinch outward to zoom. Email waits — it has nowhere to be.

4. Decide what it needs — Most emails need nothing. Some need a reply, some need filing, some need deleting. You are the boss of every one.

TALE

TRUE STORY

Doug reads every email aloud to his wife, in a dramatic newsreader voice.

"BREAKING NEWS," he announces, "the pharmacy confirms your prescription is ready." She says it makes even bills entertaining.

! Long emails are fine to skim — read the first line and the last line first. The middle is usually details you can return to.

Take care: An email demanding you act NOW — pay, click, panic — deserves your suspicion, not your speed. Urgency is the scammer's favourite costume.

WRITE BACK

Replying for the First Time

Replying is a conversation: they wrote, now you write back. Four taps, and your words are on their way.

Open the message › Tap Reply › Write your answer › Tap Send

1. Open their message — Tap the email you want to answer so it's open on your screen.

2. Tap Reply — The curved-arrow Reply button (not Reply All — more on that later). A fresh writing space appears above their message.

3. Write your answer — Type naturally, as if talking. “Thanks for letting me know — Sunday works perfectly!” is a complete, excellent reply.

4. Tap Send — The paper-plane or “Send” button launches your words. They arrive in seconds. You have just emailed.

TALE

E STORY

For her first reply, Agnes wrote three paragraphs, deleted two, rewrote the third, then sent “Sounds lovely, dear.

See you Sunday. Love, Mum.” “Editing,” she says, “is just thinking with a keyboard.”

!

Your reply automatically includes the original message below yours, so nobody wonders “which Sunday?” — the context travels along.

Take care: Read your reply once before sending — especially the recipient's name. “Love, Mum” sent to the plumber is survivable, but check anyway.

A FRESH PAGE

Writing a Brand-New Email

Starting a fresh email — to invite, to thank, to ask — is the moment email becomes truly yours. Here is the whole ceremony.

Tap Compose › Add the address › Write a subject › Write and send

1. Tap Compose — The pencil, plus sign, or “Compose” button — usually bottom-right or top-left. A blank message appears.

2. Address it — In the “To” field, type the person's name or address. Your contacts will suggest matches as you type — tap the right one.

3. Add a subject — A few honest words: “Sunday dinner,” “Thank you!”, “Question about Tuesday.” Subjects get emails opened.

4. Write and send — Say hello, say your piece, sign your name, tap Send. Congratulations — you are officially an email person.

TALE

Frank's first brand-new email was to his brother: “Testing.

Do not be alarmed. — Frank.” His brother framed the printout. It hangs in his hallway to this day.

!

Start every new email with the subject line — it focuses your mind on what the message is actually about before you write a word.

Take care: Double-check the “To” field before sending, especially with common names. There are many Bobs; make sure it's your Bob.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Subject Line That Gets Opened

The subject line is the handshake of your email — it decides whether your message gets opened now, later, or never.

Decide the point › Shrink to a few words › Write it first › Send

1. Say what it's about — "Photos from the lake," "Doctor appointment Thursday," "Happy birthday!" Honest and specific wins every time.

2. Keep it short — Five to eight words is the sweet spot. "Re: re: re: Fwd: hello" is not a subject; it is a cry for help.

3. Front-load the important word — Put the key word first: "URGENT: prescription pickup" beats "Just wanted to mention something about the prescription."

4. Match the mood — Warm news gets warm subjects ("Wonderful news!"). Business gets plain ones ("Invoice #4821"). The subject sets expectations.

TALE

Vera's subject lines are legendary: "The casserole dish question (urgent-ish)." Her family opens her emails instantly.

"A good subject," Vera says, "is a headline. I was a headline person before it was cool."

! Never leave the subject blank — blank subjects look like spam and may be ignored or filtered. Five honest words beat none.

Take care: ALL CAPS SUBJECTS READ AS SHOUTING, and spam filters dislike them too. Save capitals for the truly extraordinary.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Saying Hello and Signing Off

Emails are letters, and letters have manners. A friendly hello and a proper sign-off take ten seconds and make every message warmer.

Greet warmly › Say your piece › Sign your name › Send

1. Open with a greeting — “Hi Joan,” “Hello dear,” “Dear Mr. Singh,” — match the warmth to the relationship. “Hi” covers almost everything.

2. Get to the point kindly — One or two short paragraphs beat a wall of text. Say what you mean, then stop — brevity is a gift to the reader.

3. Close with care — “Thanks so much,” “See you Sunday,” “Best wishes” — then your name. A sign-off is the smile at the end.

4. The automatic signature — Most mail apps can add your name and phone number to every email automatically. Set it once in Settings; enjoy it forever.

TALE

Every email from Uncle Ray opens with “Dearest,” and closes with “Your devoted brother, Raymond.” He has emailed the pizza place twice.

They treasure him.

!

For quick replies to family, “Hi!” and your name are plenty. Save the formal greetings for strangers and officialdom.

Take care: Sarcasm and jokes often misfire in email — without your voice and smile, “nice job” can read as an insult. When in doubt, add a smiley.

CHOOSE WISELY

Reply vs Reply All

Two buttons, one dangerous. Choosing between Reply and Reply All is the most consequential tap in everyday email.

One person? Reply › Everyone? Reply All › Unsure? Reply › Breathe

1. Reply = just the sender — Your answer goes to the one person who wrote to you. Private, safe, and right 95 per cent of the time.

2. Reply All = everyone — Your answer goes to every recipient of the original. Useful for “We're all meeting at 2!” — disastrous for “love you, sweetie.”

3. The safe default — Make Reply your habit and Reply All your exception. You will never accidentally propose to a choir again.

TALE

Reply All turned Mabel's “sounds good, dear” into a message to 47 choir members.

She received 12 “who is this?” replies and one marriage proposal (joking, she thinks). She now treats Reply All like a loaded mousetrap.

!

On group emails, Reply answers only the sender; Reply All answers everyone. When in doubt, Reply — you can always forward later.

Take care: Never use Reply All to say “please remove me from this list” — it emails everyone to announce you don't want emails. The irony is lost on no one.

PASS IT ON

Forwarding Without Forwarding Trouble

Forwarding passes an email along to someone new — a joke, an invitation, useful information. Quick, handy, and worth doing thoughtfully.

Open the message › Tap Forward › Add addresses › Add a note, send

1. Open the message — Find the email worth sharing and open it fully.

2. Tap Forward — The arrow pointing right. A new message appears with the old one quoted below.

3. Choose who gets it — Add addresses in the “To” field. Choose people who would genuinely enjoy it — not your entire contacts list.

4. Add a personal note — “Thought of you when I saw this!” above the forwarded text turns a forward into a gift.

TALE

Gladys forwards every joke to everyone she knows, instantly.

Her family has a rule: “Gladys forwards are opened on Sundays only.” Gladys considers this a triumph of organization.

!

Before forwarding warnings or health claims, check them with a quick web search. Most alarming forwards are old hoaxes wearing new dates.

Take care: Forwarded emails often carry long trails of old addresses. Trim the clutter before sending — nobody needs to see 14 previous forwards.

Enjoyed this sample?

Get the full book, and more free sample chapters, at
www.buyproof.ca

Join our email list and be the first to hear about
new Proof-series releases for Canadians.

We email only about new books.
Unsubscribe anytime.

