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e-Tips Newsletter

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Keith Vincent

(Wil and Keith are trading space. Last month's e-Tip featured two articles by Keith. This month we feature a substantial article by Wil.)

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Top 10 Reasons to Use Gmail

Top 10 Reasons to Use Gmail



I've been using Gmail since it was first made available. For the last year I've been using it exclusively for all my business and personal email. Gmail is such a rich resource for e-mail that if I were to touch on all of the things it can do, this article would be extremely long. Instead, I'll give you a *Top 10 Reasons to use Gmail*, as inspired by David Letterman.

10. **Easily convert emails into TASKS and prioritize transcript requests to save time.** When a law offices emails me a transcript request, I click on that email and set it up as a **task** in Gmail, which allows me to easily track my to-do list of transcripts including the dates they are due. To turn on **Tasks** in Gmail, visit the Gmail Labs Tab under Settings and enable **Tasks**. You can prioritize your tags by dragging them up and down and can even assign due dates and sort them by date due as well. You can also use Gmail Tasks even if transcript requests aren't e-mailed to you. Just send an e-mail note to yourself with the details of the transcript request and add that to your Tasks list. These tasks can even be tied in with your Google Calendar, but that's a story for another article.

9. **You can ACCESS your email, including your tasks, from any computer and even your web-enabled phone anywhere, anytime.** Just go to **gmail.google.com**. To access your to-do list or tasks directly from your mobile phone browser, just go to **gmail.com/tasks** on your phone. This way you can take your to-do list everywhere you go. You can download gmail software for many mobile phones, but special software is not required. It is so powerful not to be tied down to one computer. As more and more of us are using multiple computers and smart phones, being tied to one computer with specific software installed on it can really be a pain.

8. It is "optional" to **SYNCHRONIZE with Microsoft Outlook**. If you've been using Microsoft Outlook 2003 or later, get Microsoft Outlook sync. This way you can continue using Outlook, without going to the Gmail
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Please keep in mind that because of the volume of e-mail we receive and the fact that that we are volunteering our time for this free newsletter, we can't routinely answer individual questions by phone or e-mail, nor can we consult on problems or purchasing decisions.

**Advantage Software
Tech Support
24/7/365
1-800-800-1759**

Top 10 Reasons to use Gmail (continued)

website. You'll get all of your Gmail through Microsoft Outlook instead. However, when you go to access your Gmail from a different computer or your smart phone, all of your e-mail will still be available to you on the web. Outlook synchronization is a great way to start using Gmail and to slowly get used to the way it works. Sometimes a go-slow approach is the best way to get accustomed to something so fundamentally different than what we are used to. With Microsoft Outlook sync, if you delete a message from Outlook, it will delete from your gmail account as well. Go to <https://tools.google.com/dlpage/gappssync>. You do not need to pay for the professional version if you download the educational version, which is free.

You'll need Outlook 2003 ServicePack3 or 2007 SP2 (or SP1 with current Outlook updates, aka hot fixes), running on Windows XP SP2 (with current Windows updates) or Vista SP1 (with current Windows updates).

7. Gmail THEMES allow you to customize the look and feel of your Gmail account. Get creative

and choose one of the colored or artistic Themes for your Gmail page. In the upper right-hand side of your Gmail page choose Settings / Themes and pick the one that suits you. To use Themes if you've installed Gmail for Google Apps, open settings and look for the themes tab on the far right. If you have themes, it should be there. If you don't yet, be patient because Google takes some time once a user has opened a Gmail account to enable some of these advanced features I've been describing. One of the cool things about themes is that there are even some themes that change with the time of day. Have fun.

6. Gmail uses LABELS instead of folders to help keep you organized. Gmail does not let you put messages in custom folders. While a little confusing at first, once you get used to this there are many advantages because each of your individual emails can have several labels such as "transcript request," "expedite" or "daily." You can also click on a particular email and add a star. **Starring your messages** is also a great way to organize your inbox. I simply take the star off the email once I've replied to an e-mail or completed a task I needed to do

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Top 10 Reasons to Use Gmail *(continued)*

associated with it.

5. One of the best reasons to use Gmail is that you can **use Google SEARCH within Gmail to find the message you are looking for.** Just click in the search window on the Gmail screen like you would do a regular Google Internet search. This is the reason I first started using Gmail exclusively because I found the Search feature to be so powerful. I used to use Google Desktop search because it searched for my e-mail messages in Outlook. Now I can do it directly from my Gmail screen. You can also quit bothering to sort your email and just Search it instead.

4. **Gmail gives you a HUGE amount of space.** If you need more, you can purchase up to 10 gigabytes for \$20 per year. This storage space can also be used by other Google products such as Picasa for your Web photo albums. With all of this space, you won't need to bother deleting old messages, just archive them instead which is another great time saver. Archiving a message simply takes it out of your "Inbox" but leaves it in your "All Mail" screen. Gmail has also increased the size of e-mail attachments to 20 megabytes. This way it is even possible to just email smaller WAV files.

3. **Gmail has a so-good-you-might-not-know-it's-there SPAM filter.** This will help eliminate time you spend dealing with junk mail. If you get spam in your inbox, just click on the SPAM button to alert the spam filters that you don't want anymore e-mail from the sender. I used to pay for an anti-spam service and now longer need to, so I'm even saving money. If you don't want to use Gmail's SPAM filter, you can turn it off and there is a way to use your own. Also, if you use Google Outlook Sync, which now has a free Microsoft spam filter, you can get double filtering of spam for even greater accuracy of spam detection.

2. **You can organize your replies into THREADS.** Ever had someone reply to your email

as if they are the only person you ever talk to. Something like "yes", but they don't include your email in their reply so you don't know what they are responding "yes" to? Now your conversations thread together and show you what you sent them, even when they don't. And when you archive or label a message, it applies to the entire thread too. As you receive more responses, the threaded conversation grows and keeps track of it all in chronological order. 10 related messages back and forth between yourself and another person or persons now appear in your inbox as one message **Thread.** This simplifies dealing with multiple email messages. We're all getting tons of email these days. Gmail threads are a great way to cut down on the clutter and disorganization of this information overload we're exposed to.

... and the #1 reason why you should use Gmail ...

1. It's **FREE!!!**

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