

NEGUS SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS SERIES

Google™ Apps

D E C I P H E R E D

Compute in the Cloud to Streamline Your Desktop

Scott Granneman



PRACTICE SOFTWARE FREEDOM

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Foreword

Whether Microsoft likes it or not, thousands of people are moving from office applications on their own computers to free, collaborative applications in the cloud. In the arena of Internet-based cloud applications, no company has made a bigger splash of late than Google and the offering featured in this book: Google Apps.

With Google Apps, you can create websites, email accounts, and calendars for your business or organization under the umbrella of your own customized domain name. You can write documents, build spreadsheets, and use instant messaging—all done collaboratively with other users. And you can do all this with no investment in infrastructure on the backend and simple Internet-connected web browsers on the frontend.

Google Apps give you the opportunity to replace the headache of maintaining the basic office applications your business or organization needs with the freedom to focus on your own business. Everything is stored on Google servers and run with web-based applications. In fact, you'll find that you don't even need separate office applications.

Now, if you find it a bit scary to leave the comfort of your cranky old Word, Excel, and Outlook applications, you may appreciate some reassurance and guidance before jumping into Google Apps. You may wonder how to choose the exact Google Apps service that will work for you. You may have questions about the security and control you'll have of the content you create. To address those and other concerns with getting into Google Apps, I leave you in the capable hands of Scott Granneman.

With the focus of our series on software freedom, we were thrilled when Scott proposed this book on Google Apps. Linux and other free software makes Google Apps possible. As someone using the service, you may not know that you are run-

ning free software. The results of software freedom will shine through to you in many ways, such as:

- Freedom to access your email, calendars, documents, and spreadsheets from any web browser (whether from Windows, Mac, Linux or even your mobile phone).
- Freedom to collaborate live with co-workers and friends.
- Freedom from maintaining your own server infrastructure.
- Freedom from constant software upgrades (as Google Apps developers express their freedom to modify and rapidly develop and improve the software behind the scenes).
- And did I mention freedom from paying for software (at least beginning with basic service)?

If you don't have technical expertise to set up your own servers, don't worry. Google Apps takes care of most of that. For the rest, Scott walks you through the more technical aspects. For example, you'll learn how to set up DNS records for your own domain and how to transition your current email accounts, documents, and address books into Google Apps. If your IT staff is afraid of losing control of your critical communications and data, Scott describes how they can maintain control and oversight of your organization's Google Apps accounts.

After you have finished with Scott's descriptions, you could end up with your own website under the domain name of your choice and hosted in Google Apps. You could have email accounts for all your people set up under that domain name. And you could have a full range of collaborative documentation and communications tools configured for everyone to access (within or outside of your organization as you choose).

So I leave you to Scott Granneman and Google Apps. I trust that you will find his writing both useful and entertaining, as I have. Good luck!

—*Christopher Negus, Series Editor*

Preface

I've been using Google Apps since it came out, back when it was known as Google Apps for Your Domain (or GAFYD by many). I was impressed from the beginning with Google Apps's products and even more impressed by Google's goals: to create an online suite of software and services that anyone could use from anywhere in the world, with everything stored online in the cloud.

Over the past several years Google has expanded Google Apps in many directions. New Apps have appeared, and new features have shown up on an almost-weekly basis. In fact, the constant improvements have made this book hard to write—every time I would finish a chapter, I'd have to revise it again after Google changed something or in some cases added new programs.



NOTE

To keep up with these changes, visit my blog dedicated to this book and Google Apps. Titled “1 and 100 Zeroes,” you'll find it at www.1and100zeroes.com.

This book isn't for the absolute beginner to Google Apps—I don't spend endless chapters explaining how to use Gmail, Google Calendar, or Google Docs in mind-numbing detail (“Click this button to do foo. Press here to do bar. Drag this to do foobar.”). Instead, I assume throughout this book that you have the basics down and you're looking for something more. You want tips and tricks for using Google Apps that will make you more productive. You want the skinny on cool features that may not be obvious. You want details about programs that you can't find in any other book.

If that's what you want, you're holding the right book in your hands.

Much of what I write about in this book is based on my personal experience using Google Apps, but the book wouldn't have been possible without the thoughts, experiences, and writings of lots of other folks who contribute daily to some excellent blogs. If you want to keep up with Google Apps, let me suggest the following resources.

First are the official Google blogs, which are often full of good stuff:

- The official update feed from the Google Apps team
<http://googleappsupdates.blogspot.com>
- Official Google Blog
<http://googleblog.blogspot.com>
- Official Gmail Blog
<http://gmailblog.blogspot.com>
- Official Google Docs Blog
<http://googledocs.blogspot.com>
- Google Code Blog
<http://google-code-updates.blogspot.com>
- Google Sites Blog
<http://googlesitesblog.blogspot.com>
- Google Talkabout
<http://googletalk.blogspot.com>
- Official Google Data APIs Blog
<http://googledataapis.blogspot.com>
- Official Google Mobile Blog
<http://googlemobile.blogspot.com>

As great as Google's own blogs are, there's more great stuff out there written by non-Goglers. The following blogs contain information about Google Apps that I read, use, and learn from every day (they're in alphabetical order, not preference):

- Digital Inspiration
www.labnol.org
- Download Squad
www.downloadsquad.com
- Google Blogscoped
<http://blogscoped.com>

Computing in the Cloud

Microsoft Office is the undisputed 800-pound gorilla in the office suite jungle, with millions of users and billions of dollars in sales. However, as we saw in King Kong, even the mightiest gorilla can be hurt by enough buzzing planes. If one of those planes is actually a mighty jet named Google, then good ol' Kong may be facing more trouble than he's anticipated.

Over the last few years, Google has been polishing Google Apps, its online suite of software that includes most of the features found in mainstream office suites and then some:

- Word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations
- Email and contacts, including message security and recovery
- Calendar
- Wikis and websites
- Instant messaging
- Video sharing

Google is seeing phenomenal success with Google Apps. Over 3000 businesses a day are signing up at a rate of over one million per year. In total, over 500,000 businesses use Google Apps, with more than ten million active users. Of those, hundreds of thousands pay for the Premier Edition of Google Apps, which costs \$50 per year. In the realm of education, thousands of universities, with more than one million active students and staff on six continents, are using Google Apps.

Some of those clients in business include the following:

- Brasil Telecom
- The District of Columbia (38,000 employees)
- Genentech
- Indoff (500 employees)
- Intel
- L'Oreal R&D
- Procter & Gamble Global Business Services
- Prudential Real Estate Affiliates (450 employees)
- Telegraph Media Group (1400 employees)
- Valeo (32,000 employees)

As for clients in education, there are many impressive wins in that list as well:

- Arizona State University (65,000 students)
- George Washington University
- Hofstra University
- Indiana University
- Kent State University
- Northwestern University (14,000 students)
- University of Delhi
- University of North Carolina—Greensboro
- University of Southern California
- University of Virginia

Just to give one example, Arizona State University has 65,000 students, which is obviously a huge number, but it took only two weeks to deploy Google Apps. As a result of the switch, ASU is now saving \$500,000 a year, which is nothing to sneeze at.

This might all seem like a drop in the bucket compared with Microsoft's reach and profits, and in strictly numerical terms, it is. However, remember that Google makes its money primarily through ad sales, and it therefore has an overwhelming interest in moving as much of our lives as possible online. The more we move online, the more opportunities Google has to place ads in front of our eyeballs.

In addition, every person who starts using Google Apps is potentially one less customer for Microsoft, which hurts Google's biggest competitor in the long run. Microsoft has finally woken up to the fact that software and services are inexorably

moving to the Net, and it has responded with its own attempts in this area, called Microsoft Online Services.



NOTE

Microsoft also markets a service called Office Live (www.officelive.com), but don't be fooled. That's just rebranded Hotmail, document storage (you still have to have Word, Excel, and PowerPoint installed on your PC), and el cheapo website hosting.

Microsoft's involvement, however, remains tied to its "software plus services" model, in which online tools still require the use of software running on a PC to work. This protects Microsoft's cash cows, Windows and Office, first and foremost, while allowing the company to trumpet its participation in moving online as well.

If you look more closely at Microsoft's offering, you see that it still requires software that runs on your computer beyond just a web browser. Sure, the cheapest offering—\$3 per user per month—provides email through a web browser, but that's just Outlook Web Access pointed to an Exchange server. To use other tools such as SharePoint server access for document sharing and collaboration, expensive licenses for Microsoft Office are still mandatory.

Prices go up from there so that the full package, with hosted Exchange and SharePoint and other tools, starts at \$15 per user per month, which comes to \$180 per year per person. And of course it works only with Microsoft software, which means Windows and Office. You can use a Mac to read email, but you have to use Entourage, Microsoft's Outlook-like program that's part of the company's Office suite, for Macs. Linux users? Don't be silly!

It's not just Microsoft, however. Yahoo is sniffing around the hosted services concept with the formation of a new Cloud Computing & Data Infrastructure Group. And Amazon has been doing this for years with its Amazon Web Services (<http://aws.amazon.com>), which includes Elastic Compute Cloud, Simple DB, Simple Storage Service, and Simple Queue Service.

Something is changing in business, on the Internet, and in technology. The term that is increasingly used to apply to this change is *cloud computing*.

THE RISE OF CLOUD COMPUTING

As a term of technical slang, the "cloud" refers to the Internet, so cloud computing refers to Internet-centric software and services that are outsourced to someone else

and offered on pay-as-you-go terms. In the case of Google Apps, organizations don't have to install software on their computers (and it doesn't matter if those computers are running Windows, Mac OS X, or Linux), and they don't have to install and maintain expensive servers and the associated software they require to run. Instead, they simply access Google's services in a web browser.

Everything is on Google's infrastructure—the software, the data, the backups, everything—and is therefore accessible in the cloud from anywhere. It doesn't matter if you're getting to Google Apps from your computer at work or at home, or from your iPhone or BlackBerry, or from your office or somewhere in Timbuktu because everything you need is always available in Google's cloud.

It's not a new idea *per se*—decades ago, Sun co-founder John Gage proclaimed that “the network is the computer”—but it's finally been able to reach a period of reality and even hypergrowth thanks to the spread of reliable high-speed Internet access coupled with the virtually limitless supplies of computer storage and processing power. As it gets cheaper and cheaper for companies such as Google and Amazon to build out massive server farms and then connect those mind-bogglingly powerful resources to users across the world via the Internet, new and exciting technologies become possible. Case study number one: Google Apps, the subject of this book.

Of course, there are problems that companies building services in the cloud and users of those services will face.

To start with, there's reliability. Yes, even the mighty Google has stumbled. In July 2008, for example, Google Docs was unavailable to many users for an hour or so. Virtually all companies have suffered downtimes, however, ranging from eBay to Amazon to Royal Bank of Canada to AT&T. This is simply a fact of life. Downtimes will happen. Humans can attempt to plan for every eventuality, but mistakes, errors, and even natural events beyond our control intrude and cause problems. It's an interesting psychological fact, though, that we humans exhibit something called the illusion of control. For instance, we are far more likely to die in a car than on a plane, but people are often psychologically more comfortable driving in their cars than riding on planes due to the fact that drivers feel in control of the situation, while passengers may not.

For this reason, many people feel safer running their own servers instead of outsourcing to Google because they want that feeling of control over their machines and their data. However, Google now offers a service level agreement (SLA) for the Premier Edition of Google Apps that guarantees 99.9% uptime for Gmail (that means about 9 hours of downtime a year). SLAs for other services are coming soon as well.

In addition, take a look at this 99.9% uptime guarantee. Before you refuse to even consider using Google Apps, think honestly about your own organization's infrastructure. I know you work hard, and you do the absolute best you can, but can you honestly say that your servers are down less than 9 hours a year? If so, then maybe you should continue doing things the way you've been doing them. But if not, maybe you should think a bit more about cloud computing the Google way.

In fact, more than just a lack of downtime, I would argue that customers actually want honest communication about problems and what cloud computing providers are doing about them. If a service I use is down, that's annoying, but if I can see that the service providers know about the issue and follow along as they fix it, I'm fine. I'm in the loop, and that reduces my stress and annoyance. Google has been okay at communication so far, but it is working on improving it, which is always a good thing.

And finally, there is security. Again, many organizations have their own internal security matters they need to attend to long before they begin to worry about Google Apps' security. And besides, Google does take security seriously. For an overview, read The Official Google Blog's "How Google keeps your information secure" (<http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/03/how-google-keeps-your-information.html>) for the company's four-prong strategy: philosophy, technology, process, and people. But on top of that, realize that Google eats its own dog food—it uses Google Apps itself. If there's a security vulnerability, no one feels it more acutely than Google. When your business is run on what you're selling, you can bet that you'll make darn sure that everything is as safe as it could possibly be.

In the end, cloud computing, especially as it is embodied by Google Apps, brings enormous benefits to users, administrators, and organizations that simply cannot be ignored.

- **Access from anywhere**—I have several computers at home, one at work, one at Washington University in St. Louis where I teach, and I use computers that aren't mine at various locations all the time. On top of those, I carry my iPhone with me everywhere I go. With Google Apps, I'm always connected to my email, my calendar, and my data. If I'm online, I can access and use Google Apps. And even if I'm not online, I can still use most everything I need with Google Apps as well.
- **Platform- and browser-agnostic**—I use a Mac mostly, but I also use Linux and sometimes Windows. When it comes to web browsers, I'm running Firefox and Safari constantly, but I'll also open Google Chrome and Opera, and even every once in a while if I really have to, and I'm forced, Internet

Explorer. Google Apps doesn't really care what operating system I'm running, and it does a heck of a job working with my menagerie of web browsers. That's the way it should be, and I appreciate it.

- **Costs less**—I don't need to buy special servers, operating systems, and software to access and use Google Apps. All I have to have is a free web browser on an Internet-enabled device, and I can work with Google Apps. Further, Google Apps has only two price points: free, which provides the services most users and organizations need, and \$50 per user per year for the Premier Edition of Google Apps that is more suited to businesses with specialized needs. Even at \$50 per user per year, that's a negligible expense for an incredible set of services.
- **Constant improvements**—Google rolls out new features for Google Apps at least every month, thereby constantly making its software better. Those new features arrive as part of Google Apps without the need for additional software installs. And they're free. Something that gets better all the time without inconveniencing me or costing me extra money? Sounds great!
- **Someone else worries about the plumbing**—I don't have millions of dollars and thousands of smart folks at my immediate disposal, but Google does. The company has smart and experienced programmers, admins, and engineers, as well as money, and an amazing infrastructure of computers and networks—and by using Google Apps, I can use all of that for my own benefit. I don't have to concern myself with the hard stuff that Google takes care of; instead, I can focus on using Google Apps to make my life and work more productive.
- **Backup and reliability**—As part of that massive infrastructure, Google provides backup for my data. Of course, it's always a good idea to back up things yourself, and I cover doing just that in Appendix A, but know that you don't need to worry about day to day losses. And Google's network has been remarkably reliable, with next to no downtime, so you know you can count on it.
- **Security**—It's a fact of life that companies have to worry about security. Google Apps takes care of much of that, for instance, by scanning automatically for viruses and spam. Even better, its tools for detecting those nasties are excellent and highly effective. You can access most Google Apps services via an encrypted connection, which stymies snoops, and there are other security tools available for those that need them.
- **Collaboration and sharing**—No one is an island, and that's never been more true than in today's interconnected world. We don't work today as much as we collaborate and share, and Google Apps makes this interesting. The

first time you find yourself editing a file in Google Docs with another person on a different computer, and you realize that both of you are able to edit the same file at the same time, you'll gasp. The second time you edit a file with someone else, you'll start to wonder why all software doesn't work that way. It's that easy and that natural, and Google Apps makes it simple.

- **Search instead of find**—Google is the king of search, and it's no surprise that its super-powerful search tools are embedded throughout Google Apps. Forget filing your email messages; instead, search for them. Don't worry about pawing through subfolder after subfolder looking for that document you need; just search for it. Can't find the details you need for that upcoming appointment? Search your Google Calendar and find past meetings that tell you what you need to know.
- **Work with your existing programs**—As great as Google Apps is, the company still realizes that many people are wed to one or more desktop tools that they feel they can't live without (actually, I'd argue that most of the time, they just don't yet realize that they can in fact live without them). Outlook often falls into this category, but it's not just Outlook. Maybe you're a huge fan of Apple's iCal, or Thunderbird, or OpenOffice.org. In most cases, you can still use your favorite desktop tools with Google Apps. I will show you how in several chapters throughout this book.

Cloud computing is very much a popular buzzword right now, but Google Apps shows that there is a large and growing business behind that buzzword. It's an exciting time to be in business and technology, as several forces that have been improving for years—networks, computers, and mobility, to name but a few—have converged to create something that offers a new computing paradigm that can benefit virtually everyone who uses a computer for their work and life. As you'll see in this book, Google Apps provides those benefits, in spades.

FURTHER READING

There's always more to learn, so here are some resources that you might find handy if you want to learn more about Google Apps and cloud computing:

- Google's clients
 - John Cox's "Google, Microsoft woo higher ed with freebies" from eWeek (August 4, 2008).
 - "Businesses share their stories": www.google.com/apps/intl/en/business/customers.html

- “Google Apps to Meet iPhone at Texas University”: www.eweek.com/c/a/Messaging-and-Collaboration/Google-Apps-to-Meet-iPhone-at-Texas-University/
- “Google Apps Premier Edition Takes Aim at the Enterprise”: www.eweek.com/c/a/Enterprise-Applications/Google-Apps-Premier-Edition-Takes-Aim-at-the-Enterprise/
- “Customers Compile Wish List for Google Apps”: www.eweek.com/c/a/Messaging-and-Collaboration/Customers-Compile-Wish-List-for-Google-Apps/
- “One year mark for Google Apps Education Edition”: <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2007/10/one-year-mark-for-google-apps-education.html>
- “Back to school with more than 1 million users worldwide”: <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/07/back-to-school-with-more-than-1-million.html>
- “Google Apps tops 1 million businesses”: http://news.cnet.com/8301-13953_3-10029861-80.html
- “No One’s Paying For Google Apps, But That’s Okay (GOOG)”: www.alleyinsider.com/2008/7/no-one-paying-for-google-apps
- “Customers”: www.google.com/a/help/intl/en-GB/admins/customers.html
- Microsoft’s Cloud Computer Offerings
 - “Microsoft Launches Hosted Exchange Deals”: www.techcrunch.com/2008/07/08/microsoft-launch-hosted-exchange-deals/
 - “Microsoft Unveils Pricing and Partner Model for Web-Based Messaging and Collaboration Services”: www.microsoft.com/presspass/press/2008/jul08/07-08BOSGWPCAPR.msp
 - Microsoft Online Services: www.microsoft.com/online/
- Cloud Computing
 - “Twenty Experts Define Cloud Computing”: http://cloudcomputing.sys-con.com/read/612375_p.htm
 - “Cloud Computing: So You Don’t Have to Stand Still”: www.nytimes.com/2008/05/25/technology/25proto.html
 - Nicholas Carr’s The Big Switch: www.nicholasgarr.com/bigswitch/ (especially see www.nicholasgarr.com/bigswitch/readings.shtml)
 - “Can you trust your business to Google’s cloud?”: http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-9989019-2.html

- “Google Docs goes down, user data does not”: http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-9985608-2.html
- Google Apps
 - Interactive Video Guide: <http://services.google.com/apps/resources/overviews/welcome/topicWelcome/index.html>
 - Product Overview and Tour Videos
 - Google Apps Quick Tour: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJT3pagjd8s
 - Rajen Sheth demos Google Apps: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wY2bpr1TAA4
 - Google Apps Overview Screencast: <https://services.google.com/apps/site/overview/index.html>
 - Official Google Apps Discussion Group: <http://groups.google.com/group/apps-discuss>
 - The official update feed from the Google Apps team (blog): <http://googleappsupdates.blogspot.com>
 - Webinars: www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/admins/seminars.html
- News and Announcements
 - News: www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/admins/news.html
 - New features for users and admins: www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/admins/new.html
 - Google Apps Frequently Reported Issues: www.google.com/support/a/bin/request.py?contact_type=known_issues
 - Support Options: www.google.com/support/a/bin/static.py?page=contacting_support.html

Things to Know About Using Gmail

Gmail is fantastic, maybe the best aspect of Google Apps. On the one hand, I've found that it's remarkably easy to use, so much so that almost anyone can just sit in front of it and start using it. On the other hand, some aspects of it could use some elucidation, and that's what I intend to provide in this chapter.

Keep in mind that in this chapter, I'm focusing entirely on using Gmail in a web browser. In the next chapter, I look at accessing Gmail using a desktop email client such as Outlook, Apple Mail, or Thunderbird. With that in mind, let's look at five things you absolutely need to know about Gmail to use it more effectively.

SEARCHING FOR THE EXACT MESSAGE YOU NEED

Gmail is a product of Google, after all, so it's no shocker that it has excellent search capabilities. Unfortunately, many Google Search users just type a word or two into the search box and get good results, when they could get great results if they knew some advanced search operators. A similar situation exists with Gmail—most users simply search for a word or two, and they probably get good results, but if they learned a few advanced search operators, they could get great results.

So what's a search operator? Basically, it's just a word or symbol that modifies your search queries. There are oodles of search operators. Some of them are in your email headers, as shown in Table 8.1.



TIP

Here are two ways in which Google Search and Gmail's search are different. If you search Google and misspell a word, Google will suggest a correct spelling; Gmail, however, does not do so. Additionally, if you search Google for a word, Google will find that word and related plurals (searching for "dog" also brings up results with "dogs," for instance); again, Gmail does not do so.

TABLE 8.1 Search Operators for Email Headers

SEARCH OPERATOR	MEANING	EXAMPLES
to:	Messages sent to you or someone else	to:me to:Jans Carton to:jans@websanity.com
cc:	Messages CC'd to you or someone else	cc:me cc:Jans Carton cc:jans@websanity.com
bcc:	Messages you sent via BCC to someone else (not those BCC'd to you)	bcc:jans@websanity.com
subject:	Words in the Subject	subject:Project A subject:"Chapter 8"
from:	Messages sent to you by someone else	from:Jans Carton from:jans@websanity.com

Other search operators are based on searching for attachments or even the types of files that make up the attachments. Table 8.2 shows some of those search operators.

Other filenames you can search for include (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- **Movies**—avi, mov, mp4, mpg, wmv
- **Sound**—wav, wmv
- **Images**—bmp, gif, jpg, png, tiff
- **Documents**—csv, odt, ppt, rtf, txt, xls

TABLE 8.2 Search Operators for Attachments

SEARCH OPERATOR	MEANING
has:attachment	Messages that have attachments
filename:pdf	Messages with PDF attachments
filename:doc	Messages with Word attachments
filename:mp3	Messages with MP3 attachments

Google relies heavily on labels (which we look at in the next section), and you can use search operators that target specific labels, as demonstrated in Table 8.3.

TABLE 8.3 Search Operators for Labels

SEARCH OPERATOR	SHORTCUT	SHORTERCUT	SHORTESTCUT	MEANING
label:inbox	in:inbox is:inbox	l:inbox	l:^i	Messages in the Inbox
label:starred	in:starred is:starred	l:starred	l:^t	Starred messages
label:chats	in:chat is:chat	l:chats	l:^b	Archived chats
label:sent	in:sent is:sent	l:sent	l:^f	Sent messages
label:drafts	in:drafts is:drafts	l:drafts	l:^r	Draft messages
label:spam	in:spam is:spam	l:spam	l:^s	Junk messages
label:trash	in:trash is:trash	l:trash	l:^k	Messages in the Trash
label:unread	in:unread is:unread	l:unread	l:^u	Unread messages
label:read	in:read is:read	l:read		Read messages
label:anywhere	in:anywhere is:anywhere	l:anywhere		Anywhere in Gmail, including Spam and Trash (which are normally ignored)

You can also search by time, as you can see in Table 8.4. However, dates must always be expressed in yyyy/mm/dd format.

TABLE 8.4 Search Operators for Time

SEARCH OPERATOR	MEANING	EXAMPLES
after:	After, but not including, the specified date	after:2008/12/17
before:	Before, but not including, the specified date	before:2008/12/17

Things get really interesting, however, when you learn to construct more complex queries. Let's start with Boolean search terms and the various symbols you can use to build powerful queries, as displayed in Table 8.5.

TABLE 8.5 Boolean Search Terms and Symbols You Can Use to Devise Complex Queries

SEARCH OPERATOR	SYMBOL EQUIVALENT	EXAMPLES	NOTES
AND	[space]	Jans AND Carton Jans Carton	Word must be in all caps; AND is the default because spaces are its symbol.
OR		Jans OR Carton Jans Carton	Word must be in all caps.
NOT	-	Jans NOT Carton Jans-Carton	Word must be in all caps; no space after the hyphen.
	""	"Gmail address book" subject: "Saint Louis Zoo"	Search for exact phrase; capitalization ignored.
	()	subject:(Zoo PRSA) from:(Jans Jerry)	Groups different terms together.
	{}	{from:jerry from:jans}	Group ORs together.

Now that you know all the information contained in the previous tables, let's combine the various operators in Table 8.6 for some complex queries.

TABLE 8.6 Some Complex Queries and Their Meanings

SEARCH QUERY	MEANING
to:me l:^u in:inbox OR to:me l:(unread inbox)	Messages in the Inbox to me that are unread.
from:jans subject:(zoo prsa)	Messages from Jans with a subject of zoo or prsa.
l:unread from:jans after:2008/06/10	Unread messages from Jans sent after 6/10/2008.
from:jans filename:pdf -subject:zoo	Messages from Jans with PDF attachments that do not have zoo in the subject.
in:chat from:jans flickr	Chats with Jans in which Flickr is discussed.
l:^k from:jans before:2008/06/10 sub- ject:zoo	Messages from Jans sent before 6/10/2008 with zoo in the subject, but now in the trash.
subject:zoo in:anywhere	A message with zoo in the subject that could be anywhere, including Trash and Spam.
filename:{mov wmv pdf tiff} before:2006/01/01	Look for any old messages with any of several kinds of large attachments, so I can delete them to free up space.
-label:inbox OR -l:^i	Messages not in the Inbox.

Really, the best way to learn about searching Gmail is to practice and record the ones that work for you the best. If you use the Quick Links features from Gmail Labs (discussed in Chapter 7's "Quick Links" section), you can save those searches and easily return to them later.

In fact, if you often search for a particular label, you can use your browser's bookmarks to quickly return to it later. For instance, if I created a label named "Todo" and I wanted to quickly see all the messages to which I've given that label, I can just bookmark <https://mail.google.com/a/heavymetalmassage.com/#label/todo> (of course, change the domain name and label to fit your particular case).

LIVING WITH LABELS

I discussed labels in Chapter 7's "Labels" section, but I want to emphasize here just how important they are to Gmail. There are no folders in Gmail. None. Instead, Gmail uses labels to organize email, which are far better and more useful than folders. Why?

Suppose you receive an email from your coworker Bob about the Zoo project you're doing in cooperation with the Yog-Sothoth firm. You have four folders set up in your email program: Bob, Work, Zoo Project, Yog-Sothoth. Into which folder do you file the message? After you pick one, that's it—even though the email has to do with all four subjects, it can go into only one folder. If you want to find it in the future, you either have to remember which folder it's in, or click one at a time on each folder, or search. The first requires a superhuman memory if you get a ton of mail, the second is silly, and the third can be dog slow on desktop clients.

If you use Gmail, you can assign as many labels as you'd like to a message. In the example in the previous paragraph, you could assign Bob, Work, Zoo Project, and Yog-Sothoth to the message. If you wanted to find it later, you could click any of those four labels, or search—and searching Gmail is *fast*. If you learn the search operators I just covered in the previous section, it's even more efficient.

So learn to live with labels. They can be tremendously helpful. But, as I've discussed before (in Chapter 3's "Molding Your Email Folder Structure into the One Used by Gmail" section), don't go label crazy. With Gmail's powerful and fast search, you may find that the fewer labels you use, the better. Before adding a label, first ask yourself if you absolutely need it. And don't be afraid to remove labels down the road and consolidate. Instead of Work/PRSA, Work/Science Center, and Work/Zoo, just create a label titled Work and dump everything in there. After that, search becomes your friend. Try it—you may love it.

FILTERING MESSAGES EFFECTIVELY

Filters were discussed in Chapter 7's "Filters" section, where they were explained as the automated tasks that Gmail performs on your email before you ever see it. For instance, if you're sick of stupid joke emails from your Uncle Gussie, you could set up a filter that sends any email that is from Gussie and also has "joke" or "humor" in the subject to the Trash so you'll never even have to see it.

The "Filters" section of Chapter 7 focused on setting up filters. In this section, I'd like to talk about some uses for filters. To begin with, let's understand what aspects of an email are filterable. You can search for the following criteria and then use them to create your filters:

- **From**—Can be a full name (Jans Carton), part of a name (Jans), an email address (jans@websanity.com), part of an email address (websanity.com), or “me.”
- **To**—Can be a full name (Jans Carton), part of a name (Jans), an email address (jans@websanity.com), part of an email address (websanity.com), or “me.”
- **Subject**—You can search for an exact phrase by using quotation marks (“blogs to wikis”).
- **Has the Words**—You can search for an exact phrase by using quotation marks (“blogs to wikis”).
- **Doesn’t Have**—You can search for an exact phrase by using quotation marks (“blogs to wikis”).
- **Has Attachment**—A check box you can toggle.

To make sure your search criteria are correct, click Test Search, and review the results. If they’re what you want, click Next Step. On the next screen you choose the actions you’d like to perform on messages that match your criteria. Those actions are the following, any of which you can check:

- **Skip the Inbox (Archive It)**—You won’t see it in your Inbox; instead, it goes into All Mail. This is a good box to check along with others in this list.
- **Mark as Read**—If you check this along with Skip the Inbox, it’s archived and won’t stick out because it won’t be bold or listed as unread.
- **Star It**—If it’s important or needs action, star it!
- **Apply the Label**—Choose an existing label or create a new one. This action, when combined with Skip the Inbox, is equivalent to automatically filtering into folders with other email programs. A very common two-fer.
- **Forward It To**—Enter an email address to which you’d like the message to go; don’t forget that you can create email lists so that you can enter one address that sends it to several people (covered in Chapter 6’s “Email Addresses” section).
- **Delete It**—For the worst offenders.
- **Never Send It to Spam**—This makes sure that the important email from your significant other or boss never gets accidentally dumped into Spam by a mistake in Gmail’s antispam technology.

After making your choices, click Create Filter to do just that. Next to that button is a check box labeled Also Apply Filter to # Conversations Below, where # is

the number of conversations that match your filter’s search criteria. Most of the time you’re going to want to check that box because it will apply your filter’s actions to email that has already arrived, thus making sure that your mail is nicely organized.

With the filter process in mind, here are a few of my favorite filters. What’s shown in Table 8.7 is there to give you ideas, but you can search Google for others. And, of course, the best way to find a filter that works for you is to experiment.

TABLE 8.7 Some of My Favorite Gmail Filters

FILTER CRITERIA	FILTER ACTION	MEANING
From: me To: me	Apply the label: Me	Easy to find emails I’ve sent myself as reminders.
From: scott@websanity.com	Apply the Label: WebSanity	Emails I’ve sent from my work address.
Has the words: (“serial number” OR “product key” OR “activation code” OR “license key” OR regsoft	Skip the Inbox (Archive It) Apply the Label: Serial Numbers	Serial numbers for software I’ve bought (thanks to Micah Diamond, who wrote in to Lifehacker).
Has the words: (В OR И OR Ж OR И OR Ї)	Skip the Inbox (Archive It) Delete It	I don’t speak Russian or Hebrew, so this is spam (that В isn’t a capital B, it’s a Russian veh).
Has the words: filename:jpg {photo photos pic pics picture pictures attachment attached}	Apply the Label: Pictures	Finds messages with photo attachments (you can do the same kind of thing for movies, documents, and music).
to:(stlwebdev.org OR to:wwwac.org OR from:userland.com)	Skip the Inbox Apply the Label: LIST/Web-Dev	Note that you can combine to: and from: in your filter. from:(System Administrator)
subject:(“log sizes” OR subject:“disk usage report”)	Skip the Inbox Apply the Label: WS/Reports	Look for messages with a certain From and certain phrases in the Subject.

One final note about filters: after you’ve created one, you may want to add on to it later. For instance, suppose you create a filter that takes any mail from truthout.org, eff.org, or maal.org and labels it LIST/Politics. If you view your list of filters (by going to Settings, Filters, or by clicking Create a Filter and then Show Current Filters) you’ll see that it looks like this:

Matches: from:(truthout.org OR from:eff.org)
Do this: Skip Inbox, Apply label “LIST/Politics”

If you want to add another from:—this one for moabolition.org—you would click Edit and change it to this:

Matches: from:(truthout.org OR from:eff.org OR from:moabolition.org)
Do this: Skip Inbox, Apply label “LIST/Politics”

And so on. These filters can get quite long—one of mine is 25 addresses and counting, and I’ve never had an issue. But what you may not know is that you can introduce other criteria that don’t match the original set.

Suppose I want to find email sent to ydgs1@yahoo.com and also apply the LIST/Politics label to it. I could create a brand new filter for to: ydgs1@yahoo.com, but that’s kind of silly because I already have a perfectly good filter in place that labels mail with LIST/Politics. Instead, I edit the already existing filter so that it now reads this way:

Matches: from:(truthout.org OR from:eff.org OR from:moabolition.org OR to:ydgs1@yahoo.com)
Do this: Skip Inbox, Apply label “LIST/Politics”

Even though the Matches line starts with from:, and everything following is in parentheses, you can still put a to: inside the parentheses, and the filter will work just fine and dandy. In fact, you can sneak a from: or a subject: in there without an issue.



WARNING

You must use OR between your filter criteria. Not “or” and not “Or.” It must be OR. Google says.

SPEEDING THINGS UP WITH KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Gmail is eminently usable with a mouse, but if you learn the key commands that Google thoughtfully provides, you can use Gmail far faster and more efficiently.



TIP

Before you can use the advice in this section, you have to have turned on keyboard shortcuts in Gmail’s Settings, a process I mentioned in Chapter 7’s “Keyboard Shortcuts” section.

I'm not going to go through all the keyboard shortcuts that Gmail possesses because you can find the complete list at the Gmail Help Center, at <http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=6594>. In addition, I highly recommend the printable cheat sheet that you can find at <http://r.evhead.com/hodgepodge/gmail-shortcuts.html>. It's good.

Table 8.8 lists some of the shortcuts that I use all time, so I recommend them wholeheartedly. In addition, check out the links I just gave you because you are sure to find others that are just as useful.

TABLE 8.8 Some of My Favorite Gmail Keyboard Shortcuts

KEYBOARD SHORTCUT	MEANING
Working with Messages	
c	Compose in current window
r	Reply (only works in conversation view)
a	Reply to all (only works in conversation view)
f	Forward (only works in conversation view)
r ESC a	Change from reply to reply to all (only works in conversation view)
Change a Message or Conversation's Status	
x	Selects current conversation so you can work with it
s	Star (or unstar) message or conversation
!	Report spam
#	Delete message; if in conversation view, deletes and returns to list view
]	Archive and move to next conversation
Moving Around Gmail's Interface	
k	Move to newer conversation (works in list or conversation view)
j	Move to older conversation (works in list or conversation view)
u	Return to list view from conversation view
o OR Enter	Return to conversation view from list view
/	Place your cursor in the search box

KEYBOARD SHORTCUT	MEANING
g c	Go to Contacts
g i	Go to Inbox
.	Open More Actions drop-down menu

Remember, these are just a few of the many keyboard shortcuts that you can use. Check out the links I provided at the beginning of this section for more. One final thought: it's not vital that you learn all the shortcuts, as there probably isn't a person alive who has them all memorized. Instead, learn the ones that will be of most use to you.

SECURING YOUR EMAIL

Email is one of the primary ways bad guys get into Windows boxes, which are still the majority of desktop computers out there. Fortunately, Google has placed several smart protections into Gmail in an effort to minimize the security risks of its email.

Checking for Viruses

Google has virus checking built in to Gmail, which is a very good thing (it's not so much necessary for Linux or Mac OS X boxes, but it's really nice for the Windows users). Attachments you send and receive are scanned for malware every time you open the message containing the attachment.

If Google finds a virus in a message sent to you, it will try to clean the file so that you can still use it, but if the file can't be cleaned, it's off limits to you. Again, a good thing. If Google has a problem scanning the file, for whatever reason, it will notify you with a small alert. At that point, you can wait or go ahead and download the file at your own risk. That's not a good idea, in my opinion, unless you know you have really good antivirus protection on your PC.

If Google finds a virus in a message you're trying to send, it displays an alert to you, but it won't clean the file. That's up to you. Google does give you an option to Remove Attachment and Send, but that may not be what you want because the attachment may be vitally important to the message. Hopefully, though, a virus-laden attachment isn't vitally important to the message.

Even with the virus scanning, however, Google doesn't allow certain file types to be sent or received at all, including (but not limited to):

- .exe
- .d11
- .ocx
- .com
- .bat



NOTE

If you don't know what those file types are, check out Wikipedia for each of the filename extensions or go to a massive list at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_file_formats_\(alphabetical\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_file_formats_(alphabetical)) or check out the enormous database at <http://filext.com>.

If you try, you'll see the following error message: "This is an executable file. For security reasons, Gmail does not allow you to send this type of file."

You might think that you can just zip up the attachment and sneak it past Google that way, but that won't work. Google scans the compressed file, figures out that it contains a verboten file type, and puts up a stop sign. Other compression formats, such as TAR, TGZ, Z, and GZ, don't work either. For some weird reason, though, RAR is allowed.

Industrious Gmail users have figured out a few ways to get around the restriction against sending executable files, however. I'm not saying that you should do any of these, although some are a lot safer than others, but here are a few ideas:

- Rename the file extension from .exe to .123, or from .bat to .bat.removeme. Of course, tell your recipients in your email message that they need to change the extension.
- Zip the file, then zip the Zip file, and password-protect the container ZIP file.
- Use compression software that creates RAR files. Google is your friend.
- Perhaps the easiest solution is using something like YouSendIt (www.yousendit.com), Box.net (www.box.net), or any of the others listed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-click_hosting. If you don't know about them, check them out—you'll find them quite useful, and they complement Gmail well.

Stopping Image Spam

Gmail does an excellent job detecting spam, but a few can get through. One of the most annoying types of spam is image spam, in which a spammer has nothing but a picture in the body of the email. By using an image, spammers hope that it will be harder for Gmail's antispam tools to detect their come-ons. Here's a good way to make sure none of that junk gets into your Inbox.

Create a filter with these criteria:

- Has the Words: type "multipart/related.gif"
- Check the box next to Has Attachment

For the filter's actions, use these:

- Skip the Inbox (Archive It)
- Apply the Label: Image Spam

You may get false positives, which is why you're applying a label to the message. Check the messages in that label every once in a while to make sure there's nothing in there that you want and also to delete junk in there permanently.

Another way to help make spam more obvious when you look at the list of conversations in the Image Spam label is to use the Personal Level Indicators. To turn them on, in Gmail, go to Settings, General, Personal Level Indicators, and select Show Indicators. After you do so, a single right-pointing angle quotation mark (>) appears in front of messages in which your email address is in the To or CC field, and a right-pointing double angle quotation mark (>>) appears in front of messages sent only to you.

If you see a message that has a > or >> in front of it, it's less likely that it's spam and more likely that it's legit, but if you see a message without either symbol in front of it, it's more likely that it's spam and less likely that it's legit.

Finding Out Who's Accessing Your Gmail Account

If you think someone may have hacked into your Gmail account, you now have a way to tell, thanks to a feature recently added by Google. Scroll to the bottom of the main page, and you'll see text that says something like this:

This account is open in 1 other location at this IP (76.211.85.91). Last account activity: 1 minute ago.

This lets you know if another computer is accessing your Gmail account. In my case, it's perfectly okay that my account is open in two locations at my IP address

because I'm looking at Gmail in two browsers (I'm writing a book on the subject, after all!).

If you want to know more, click the Details link. On that page, you'll see all recent activity, including the type of access (browser, POP, IMAP, or SMTP), the IP address of the accessing device, and the time of access. If one of the items listed freaks you out, click the Sign Out All Other Sessions button to do just that. In a flash, you're the only one accessing your account.

And then, immediately change your password. As in right now!

Preventing Phishing

Google is now checking any email that says it comes from paypal.com or ebay.com using a technology known as DomainKeys. If the email doesn't come from either of those two domains, it's rejected silently, behind the scenes, and you'll never even know a scammer was trying to trick you. That's fantastic and a great way to protect users.



NOTE

Don't know anything about DomainKeys? Hie thee to Wikipedia, at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DomainKeys>.

Limiting How Many Emails You Can Send

To prevent spam and abuse, Google limits how many emails you can send a day. If you go over that limit, your account is temporarily suspended from sending mail.

If you're using the Standard Edition of Google Apps, you can send email to up to 500 addresses outside your domain each day. If you use the Premier or Education Editions of Google Apps, you can send mail to up to 2,000 addresses outside your domain each day. These email addresses can be anywhere in To, CC, and BCC fields.

What if you're an administrator? How do you send email to all your users if the total number of users is greater than the number of addresses to which you're allowed to send mail? Google suggests that you create multiple accounts, such as Admin1 and Admin2. If you do that, each account can send 500 messages, for a total of 1,000 if you're using the Standard Edition; the number is larger if you're using the Premier or Education Edition.

SOLVING COMMON PROBLEMS

As with all things in life, you're going to find little gotchas. Here are a few of those and their solutions.

What the Heck Is a “Lockdown in Sector 4?”

If you have the misfortune to find that you can't access Gmail any longer, and now you get a web page that says there's been a “Lockdown in sector 4!” you were probably doing something that triggered alarms at Gmail. For instance, you may have been doing one of the following:

- Using a third-party program to access Gmail that didn't behave. In particular, software that turns Gmail into a file storage system can cause problems, as well as programs that repeatedly log in to Gmail.
- A huge amount of POP-based email activity (grabbing or deleting) in a short period of time.
- Sending lots of bounced, invalid email messages (often a sign of a spammer).
- Continuous failed attempts to access your Gmail account.

No matter what the cause, you have three choices:

- Wait a while. Usually within 24 hours your access is restored. During this time you can still grab your email via IMAP or POP with a desktop client (for more on that, check out the next chapter, which is all about that subject).
- Try to figure out what you were doing that may have caused the problem and disable or uninstall that program or activity.
- Follow the provided link to fill out a form and request that Google take a look at your problem.

Receiving a lockdown in sector 4 can be tremendously irritating. I should know because I've received one myself. But be patient, give it time, figure out what may have been causing it, and all should be restored soon enough.

How Do I Troubleshoot Gmail Problems?

If you're having trouble accessing Gmail at all—the page is blank, or it never finishes loading, for instance—first check your network connection. Make sure everything is working correctly when it comes to the Net.

If that all looks fine, then try the following, in no particular order:

- Clear your web browser's cache and cookies (you'd be surprised how often that fixes things).
- Open Gmail in its Basic HTML (in other words, nonfancy) view at <http://mail.google.com/mail/h/>. After that loads, try switching to the Standard View.
- Open Gmail in Mobile View at <http://m.gmail.com>.
- If Google says that it doesn't like your web browser, but there's no reason it shouldn't, you can always bypass the check that Gmail does to make sure your browser will work. Go to <http://mail.google.com/gmail?nocheckbrowser> and see if that displays.
- Finally, check out Gmail Known Issues at https://mail.google.com/support/bin/static.py?page=known_issues.cs&hl=en&topic=12878, which contains problems and solutions in the following categories: Logging In, Chat and Contacts, Composing and Reading Mail, and POP and IMAP.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I looked at five things you should know about if you're using the web-based version of Gmail: search, labels, filters, keyboard shortcuts, and security. The more you can learn about each, the more effectively you'll be able to use Gmail. In the next chapter, we examine how to integrate Gmail into desktop and mobile email programs. Some of the things we've learned in this chapter will apply, but there's a ton of new information, too. In the same way that Gmail is constantly improving and adding new and exciting features, there's always more to learn!

FURTHER READING

There's always more to learn, so here are some resources that you might find handy if you want to learn more about Gmail:

- Overviews and high points
 - Gmail overview: www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/users/gmail.html
 - 10 reasons to use Gmail: <http://mail.google.com/mail/help/about.html>

- Getting Started Guide:
<http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=90877&topic=12925>
- Email Quick Facts:
www.google.com/support/a/bin/answer.py?answer=60761&topic=11543
- Google Apps for Admins
 - Help Topics: www.google.com/support/a/bin/topic.py?topic=9202
 - All Help topics on one page: <http://mail.google.com/support/?fulldump=1>
 - Email Switch Guide:
<http://google.com/support/a/bin/answer.py?answer=48237>
- Google Apps for Users Help Topics:
<http://mail.google.com/support/?ctx=ausers&hl=en>
- Interactive Video Guides
 - Gmail Welcome: <http://services.google.com/apps/resources/overviews/welcome/topicWelcome/page05.html>
 - Gmail tutorials: <http://services.google.com/apps/resources/overviews/welcome/topicMail/index.html>
- Gmail videos from the Google Apps YouTube Channel:
www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=8A0C9023238F7724
- Video product overviews and tours
 - Overview of Gmail in Google Apps:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JJDugn4RoQ
 - User testimonials: <http://mail.google.com/mail/help/yourstory.html>
- PDFs for training support staff
 - Login: http://services.google.com/apps/training/user_support/Mail/MailUserSupportModule2LoginIssues.pdf
 - Reading and Sending: http://services.google.com/apps/training/user_support/Mail/MailUserSupportModule3ReadingAndSending.pdf
 - Delivery: http://services.google.com/apps/training/user_support/Mail/MailUserSupportModule4DeliveryIssues.pdf
 - POP: http://services.google.com/apps/training/user_support/Mail/MailUserSupportModule6POPIssues.pdf
- Discussion groups
 - Gmail Help Discussion Group: <http://groups.google.com/group/Gmail-Help-Discussion>

- Gmail-Users: <http://groups.google.com/group/Gmail-Users>
- APIs: <http://groups.google.com/group/google-apps-apis>
- The Official Gmail Blog: <http://gmailblog.blogspot.com>
- News and Announcements: http://mail.google.com/mail/help/about_whatnews.html
- Known Issues
 - http://mail.google.com/support/bin/static.py?page=known_issues.cs
 - Google Apps Frequently Reported Issues:
www.google.com/support/a/bin/request.py?contact_type=known_issues
- Support options:
http://mail.google.com/support/bin/request.py?contact_type=contact_policy

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