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A new computer: moving your e-mail without losing old messages, with IMAP or POP

Backups & Migration

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A new computer: moving your e-mail without losing old messages, with IMAP or POP

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The short answer: it depends on how the mailbox is set up on the old computer. With **IMAP**, the messages are on the server: on the new computer you just set up the account and they appear. With **POP**, old messages may live **only on the old computer**, and you have to bring them across before you switch it off. Either way, some things always stay on the computer and get forgotten: local folders, signatures, rules and contacts.

First: IMAP or POP?

Check the account type in the e-mail program settings on the old computer. Another quick test: log in to **webmail**. If all the old messages are there, the mailbox is on IMAP (or POP with a copy left on the server). If webmail is nearly empty, the messages are on the computer.

With IMAP

1. **Look for local folders** in the old program: "Local Folders", "On My Computer", or a separate data file. Whatever is there is not on the server.

2. **If there are any,** drag those messages into a folder of the IMAP account. They are uploaded to the server (check first that the mailbox quota has room).

3. **On the new computer,** set up the account on IMAP with `mail.yourcompany.com`, port 993, SSL/TLS. Folders and messages come down on their own.

With POP

There are two ways. The first is better if you will use the mailbox on more than one device:

1 **Switch to IMAP on the way:** on the old computer, add the same mailbox as IMAP, next to the POP account. Drag the POP account's folders into the IMAP account: the messages go up to the server. On the new computer, set up IMAP only.

2 **Carry the data file across:** in Outlook, POP messages are in a .pst file (the path is shown in the account settings, under Data Files). In Thunderbird, they are in the profile folder. Copy that file or folder to the new computer and open it there.

If the Outlook file gives an error when you open it, see **repairing the Outlook data file**.

What never comes by itself

What	How to bring it
Signature	Copy the text and image, and create it again: **signatures**
Program rules	Export them if the program allows, or recreate them. Rules made in webmail live on the server and are not lost.
Contacts and calendar	Export to a file (vCard or CSV, and iCalendar) and import into the new program, or use **calendars and contacts on your own domain**.
Address suggestions	The list that pops up as you type a recipient is lost in many programs. Saved contacts are not.

! **Before you give away, sell or throw out the old computer,**
remove the account from the program and delete the data files. A configured mailbox is an open mailbox for whoever ends up with the computer.

Use the move to switch to IMAP.
With the mailbox on the server, the next computer change is just setting up the account, and your phone and webmail show the same thing. See **POP or IMAP**.

NEED A HAND?

Changing computers and not sure where your messages are? Open a ticket before you switch the old one off.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- POP or IMAP: which to choose, and what you lose by picking wrong
- POP3 and Leave a copy on the server: how it works and what goes wrong
- Repairing the Outlook data file: damaged PST or OST, SCANPST and a new OST
- Keeping your own copy of your e-mail: how to back up a mailbox
- Sent and deleted e-mails missing in Outlook with IMAP: setting the right folders
- Adding a signature to your e-mails: webmail, computer and phone

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