

Switch From Your Internet Provider's Email to Something Better

When you signed up for internet access, you probably got an email address. That's fine, but you can do better. Here's how to move to a good one.

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You've had that old @twc.com email address ever since you signed up for cable internet years ago, and it has served you well. But those cable company-provided email services are far from the best on the block, and in some cases, they may even disappear if you move or switch to a different internet provider, taking years of history and saved emails with them.

Sure, some internet service providers (or I.S.P.s) — like Comcast and AT&T — allow you to keep your email address when you leave, but others — like Spectrum — will disconnect your email service as soon as you jump ship. Even if you aren't thinking about leaving your provider now, you may be forced to in the future, and you would almost certainly be better served by a more modern, feature-filled email service like Gmail, Outlook or something else. Unfortunately, choosing a new email address means you'll need to figure out what to do with all your old messages — and set up a new email account that *isn't* tied to your internet service.

Pick your new email provider

If you're going to leave your current email service, you'll need to pick a new service to house all your messages. There are countless email services, but most people will probably want to go with one of the following:

- **[Gmail](#):** Google's Gmail is one of the most popular email services around, for good reason. It has a ton of features, a friendly conversation-focused interface, powerful search and best-in-class spam and malware filtering. All that's on top of tight integration with other Google services like Google Drive, which is great for sending attachments over Gmail's 25-megabyte limit. Gmail comes with 15 gigabytes of storage and is free, unless you want to create your own email domain for your business (like john@smithconstructioninc.com). Gmail is, however, well known for [collecting a lot of user data](#), though it does offer some control through its privacy settings.
- **[Outlook.com](#):** Microsoft's Outlook.com — the web-based email service not to be confused with the [Microsoft Outlook desktop application](#) — is the successor to Hotmail, with a cleaner, more modern interface. It comes with 15 gigabytes of storage, just as Gmail does, and integrates with Microsoft's online Office tools like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote and Sway. In 2013, Microsoft made a big deal about the fact that [it doesn't scan your emails in order to serve you ads](#), though it still does so to filter spam and malware.

- [iCloud](#): Fans of Apple products may want to look at iCloud, Apple's free email service. It integrates beautifully with Macs and iPhones and doesn't contain any ads, though it isn't as feature-rich as other options, either. It also comes with only 5 gigabytes of storage, which is shared with other Apple products, so you'll need to pay up once you reach that limit.
- [Fastmail](#): Fastmail is a paid service that bills itself as being for those who want more privacy and control. Because you pay a subscription fee (between \$3 and \$9 per month), there are no ads, and you can create an email account at any domain you want (like john@johnsmith.com). If you want something easy to use that isn't tied to one of the big tech giants, Fastmail is a great option.
- [ProtonMail](#): ProtonMail is a bit more complex than Fastmail, but cranks the privacy knob up to 11, offering end-to-end encryption when you want your emails to be truly hidden from the company's servers. It requires a bit more setup, though, and requires your recipient to jump through the same hoops, but for true privacy advocates, it's a good option. Just remember that no matter what email service you use, your privacy is only as good as the email service your friends, family and colleagues are using — just because your email service isn't scanning your email doesn't mean your friends' email service isn't scanning the emails you send to them. [Privacy is tough to come by these days](#), and that goes double for email.

Once you've picked the right provider for you, sign up for an account — picking a user name you'll want to stick with for the long haul — and get ready to migrate your old inbox over.

Migrate your old emails to your new inbox

Now you need to ask yourself a question: Do you want to keep all your old emails? If so, you may have to migrate them to your new inbox. Not every I.S.P. will let you keep your email address when you leave — Comcast and AT&T allow you to keep your email as long as you want (though Comcast requires you to log in at least once every 90 days), while Spectrum will disconnect your email service along with your internet service. If you use another I.S.P., you'll have to call its customer service team and see what the company's policy is.

I find it easier to have all my emails — old and new — in one place, so I recommend moving all your old messages to your new inbox. There are a few ways to do this. Some email providers, like Gmail and Outlook, allow you to [fetch emails from another account](#). This uses a protocol called POP, and your old I.S.P.-supplied email address has to support it — many should — though you will have to read through its help documents or call customer service for instructions on setting it up with your new account's fetcher.

If this isn't an option — or you find it is going too slowly to effectively fetch all your emails — you can also migrate your inbox using a desktop email client like [Thunderbird](#). Download and install the program on your computer and log into both your old and new email accounts. When logging into your new account, you'll need to do so using IMAP, not POP — IMAP is supported by all the services listed above, though you may need to enable it in the account's settings first.

- Dig deeper into the moment.

Once both your accounts are available in Thunderbird and your messages have been downloaded, you can just click your old inbox, select all the messages by pressing Ctrl+A (or Command+A on a Mac), then drag them to your new account's inbox. (Repeat this step for any folders you have as well.) This may take awhile, but once it is finished, log into your new email account on the web and see if all your old messages appear properly.

This process can be a bit complex if you aren't super tech-savvy, and it's hard to give specific instructions because every email service is a little different, but the help documentation for your two email services should point you in the right direction.

Forward new messages from your old account

Even if you tell all your family and friends about your new address, occasionally someone may forget and email you at your old address. If your old account has become overrun by spam over the years, you may want to keep that account separate and check it from time to time to make sure you aren't missing anything important. If your inbox is pretty clean, though, I recommend setting up email forwarding, so any new messages sent to your old account will appear in your new inbox.