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Home > Did time off lead to an overflowing inbox? Here's how to sort your inbox quickly

Did time off lead to an overflowing inbox? Here's how to sort your inbox quickly [1]

June 19, 2023 by Employee Services [2]

Time away from work is vital to balance and mental health, but the vacation glow often ends at the first sight of an overflowing inbox. These inbox tips can help you avoid overwhelm your first day back at work:

Before you go:

1. Be sure to set an out of office autoreply message so others know who is covering for you and work keeps moving in your absence. If you're new to CU and Outlook, here are instructions: Automatic out of office replies. [3]
2. Set rules so that certain emails go into specific folders. For example, have all meeting invites or messages from a specific client sent to categorized folders so you can prioritize those emails immediately. To learn more, see Using rules in Outlook [4].
3. Create a block on your calendar to reserve an hour your first day back dedicated to clearing your inbox.

When you return:

1. Use **Arrange by Subject** first to find multiple messages with the same subject line. Often, you can delete all but the most recent one, especially if it contains the full thread. This can eliminate dozens of messages in just a few minutes.
2. Then use **Arrange by From**. This allows you to quickly delete emails from professional organizations or send newsletters you want to read later to the correct folder.
3. Finally, **Arrange by Date Received,** but **Sort** with **Oldest on Top**, as seen below. We normally sort by newest to oldest, but after a week or more away, it's best to prioritize those who have been waiting the longest for a reply.
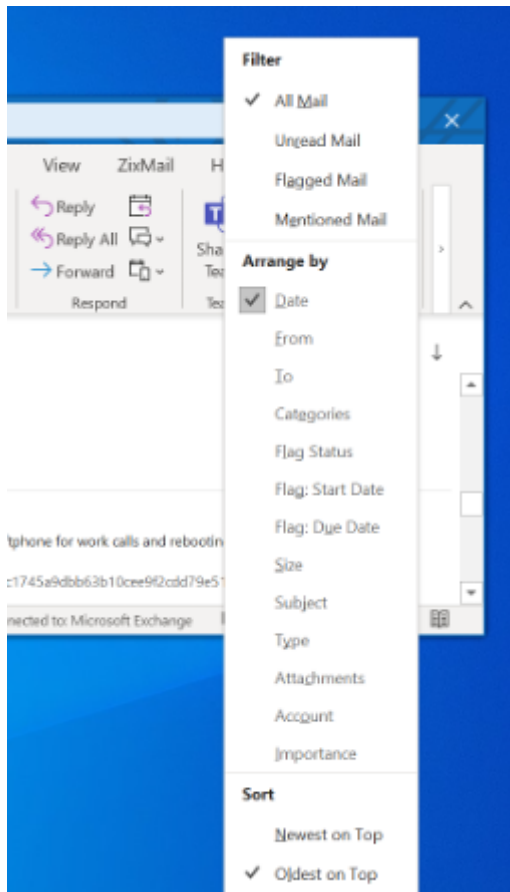
Note: If you didn't set up Rules prior to vacation, you can still apply them retroactively to clear your inbox quickly. Just be sure, on the final step of creating a rule — before you hit **Finalize** — to select the first option in Step 2: Run this rule now on messages already in "Inbox."

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