

POP or IMAP email – which is best for me?

You need to know this if . . .

. . . you use more than one computer to access your email, such as a desktop computer in the office and a laptop at home or in the car

What's the difference between POP and IMAP?

You can connect to your standard or premium mailboxes using both the POP3 (Post Office Protocol) and IMAP4 (Internet Message Access Protocol). These methods of retrieving your emails work in slightly different ways.

POP

If your email software is set up to use POP, each time you connect to your mailbox your computer will download all the emails within the mailbox on our servers and create a copy on your computer. By default, it will then delete the mails from the mailbox on our servers to free up space for new emails to arrive.

- **Advantages:** The fact that the emails are stored on your local computer is useful if you like to keep all your emails, as you can store as many as you like (providing that you have room on your hard drive). In addition, if you then want to view your emails at a later date, when you have no internet connection, they are on your computer ready for you. Once you have downloaded your emails, POP is the quickest way of reading them at a later date.
- **Disadvantages:** If you have a number of computers all accessing the same mailbox, this can become confusing. If one computer downloads your emails and removes them from the mailbox, then you attempt to retrieve your emails from a second computer, the emails will have already been downloaded and deleted, so there will be no emails for the second computer to see. See our factsheet on tips on accessing one mailbox from multiple computers.

IMAP

If your email software is set up to use IMAP, each time your computer connects to the mailbox it will show you which emails are in the mailbox on our servers. It does not download the emails to your computer, and they will remain in the mailbox. If you then decide to read an email, it will download that particular email to your computer, leaving a copy within the mailbox on the server.

Also with IMAP, your sent mails and draft emails are sent from your computer to the mailbox, essentially synchronising your local computer with your mailbox.

- **Advantages:** This means that if you have multiple computers connecting to the same mailbox on our servers, each computer will see the same thing in your inbox, sent and draft folders.
- **Disadvantages:** You are now storing all your emails within the mailbox on our servers, rather than downloading them to your local computer, so you will need to keep an eye on the mailbox space you are using. In addition, as all emails are stored online, rather than on your computer, reading emails can be slower than POP, and you may not be able to read some emails while not connected to the internet. See our article for tips on keeping a local copy of your emails.

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Next page: [Frequently asked questions](#)

Frequently asked questions

Which protocol is best for me?

- As a rule of thumb:
- POP is best if you only use one computer to check your mailbox
- IMAP is best if multiple computers check the same mailbox

How can I connect my mail software to my mailbox?

- The process will depend on the mail software you are using, and the type of mailbox you want to connect to. You can find step by step instructions in our support database article, when you log on to your control panel.

Can I connect to my mailbox using multiple computers with POP?

- Yes you can, there are certain limitations to this method, however our Factsheet on accessing one mailbox from multiple computers will show you how.

Can I connect to my mailbox using IMAP, and keep a copy of my email on my local machine?

- Yes you can, our article tips on keeping a local copy of your emails will show you how.

My email software currently connects using POP, but I would like to connect using IMAP

- It is not possible to change your email software to connect via a different protocol 'on the fly', but it is possible to change your current mailbox settings from POP to IMAP. This is a technical process, information can be found in our support database, which can be accessed from your control panel. Alternatively contact Support direct.



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