Taming the Beast!
My Inbox Zero Approach
(or: “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb”)

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Email is **ASYNCHRONOUS**!

- I find that Email is actually very useful
  - For detailed / slow-moving work
  - Often in combination with shared documents
- **It is not** the way to get rapid answers to quick questions!
  - Need to agree (!?) on a different mechanism for that rare occasion
  - For me, perhaps Teams chat is that...

- But...
  - Email arrival is **very distracting**!
  - A bloated mailbox is **very disheartening**!
- **FIRST:** Turn off ALL notifications for email! ALL!! EVERYWHERE!!
Still Need to Deal with the Mail, no?

1. Take ~15 minutes each day to “triage” your mail and empty your inbox
   a. Some mails can be deleted immediately (mailing lists, …)
      → delete them!
   b. Some mails can be answered immediately (short questions, requests, …)
      → answer, then copy to “DONE” mailbox
   c. Some mails require more time to consider and work on
      → move to “TO DO” mailbox, maybe with a priority flag / topic flag OR
      → place a reference to the mail in your “TO DO” list, move it to “DONE” mailbox

2. Reserve enough time in your calendar to manage the “TO DO” mailbox
   a. Use these meetings with the “TO DO” mailbox (1-2 per week!?) to work on mail
      → work on as many mails as possible in the given time, then stop
      → if “TO DO” mailbox keeps growing, reserve more time next week
      → if mail in “TO DO” gets very old, delete / move to “DONE”
   b. Sometimes mails can be moved to “DONE” when you work with your “TO DO” list!
Support Activities

● **Again: Turn off ALL (email) notifications EVERYWHERE**
  ○ Leave only the app where you want people to reach you, but there also tune notifications!

● **Trust your search to find emails: remove your (complicated) folder structure**
  ○ Default option: “DONE” folder
  ○ My permanent folders: ITU/Teaching/Research/Service/Private
  ○ My “transient” folders: Next Trip + occasional temporary topical folders
  ○ And of course, one transient “TO DO” folder!

● **Tune your email reader**
  ○ Learn to use the keyboard rather than the mouse
  ○ Shortcuts for setting flags and moving mails to folders
  ○ Use rules to manage unimportant emails...
  ○ You can take your mailbox offline!
  ○ …
My inbox has 8536 %&#!($@ mails, how do I start?

(1) Mark all your old mails*) as read

(2) Move them to “DONE”

(3) Forget about them!

*) maybe triage mail from last week, favorite collaborators, Peter Sestoft, …
Main Takeaways

● Turn off ALL email notifications

● Take ~15 minutes each day to “triage” your mail and empty your inbox

● Reserve enough time in your calendar to manage the “TO DO” mailbox

● Tune your email reader

● Start fresh today!