

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!