
A Simple Guide to Creating Gmail Filters for Spam

Think of Gmail filters as helpful little rules you set up that automatically handle incoming emails based on specific criteria. You can tell Gmail to do things like send emails from a particular sender straight to the Trash, or delete anything with specific words in the subject line.

Here's how to set them up:

Step 1: Open Gmail Settings

1. Open Gmail in your web browser (you can't create these specific filters on the mobile app).
2. In the top right corner, click the **Settings gear icon** (it looks like a cogwheel).
3. From the dropdown menu, choose **"See all settings."**

Step 2: Go to Filters and Blocked Addresses

1. In the settings menu that opens, click on the **"Filters and Blocked Addresses"** tab.
2. Scroll down and click on **"Create a new filter."**

Step 3: Define Your Filter Criteria (What to Look For)

Now you'll see a box where you can tell Gmail what kind of emails to look for. Here are some common ways to catch spam:

- **From:** If you keep getting spam from a specific email address (e.g., [spammer@example.com](#)), you can put that address here.
 - *Tip:* Sometimes spammers use slightly different addresses but the same domain (the part after the "@"). You could try just putting [@example.com](#) to catch everything from that domain.
- **To:** Less common for general spam, but useful if you're getting emails sent *to* a weird address that's not yours but forwards to you.
- **Subject:** Look for Common Spammy Subject Lines. You can enter specific phrases here.
 - *Examples:* "You've Won," "Claim Your Prize," "Urgent Action Required," "Limited Time Offer."
 - *Pro Tip:* You can use "OR" between words to catch multiple variations. For instance: [Viagra OR Cialis OR Pharmacy](#)
- **Has the words:** This is super powerful! You can put words or phrases that often appear in the *body* of the spam emails.
 - *Examples:* "unsubscribe," "click here," "guarantee," "cash prize," "bitcoin."
 - *Combine with "NOT":* If legitimate emails also contain a word, you can add [-word](#) (with a minus sign) to exclude them. For example, if you want to filter emails that have "money" but *not* from your bank, you could use [money -bank](#).

- **Doesn't have:** Use this if you want to filter almost everything *except* emails with a specific word.
- **Size:** You can filter messages that are "larger than" or "smaller than" a specific size. Spam is often very small, but some can be large if they include attachments.
- **Has attachment:** You can tell Gmail to filter emails only if they have an attachment. Spam sometimes comes with malicious attachments.

Step 4: Test Your Filter (Optional but Recommended)

Before you finalize the filter, you can click **"Search"** at the bottom of the filter creation box. This will show you all the existing emails in your inbox that match the criteria you just entered. This is a great way to make sure you're not accidentally catching emails you *do* want!

Step 5: Choose What the Filter Should Do (The Action)

Once you're happy with your criteria, click **"Create filter"** at the bottom right. Now, you choose what Gmail should do with emails that match your rule:

- **Skip the Inbox (Archive it):** This is useful for newsletters or promotional emails you want to keep but don't need cluttering your main inbox. They'll still be searchable.
- **Mark as read:** Makes the email appear as if you've already opened it.
- **Star it:** Adds a star to important emails.
- **Apply the label:** This is like putting it into a specific folder. You can choose an existing label or create a new one (e.g., "Spam to Review").
- **Delete it:** Sends the email directly to your Trash folder. **Use this with caution**, especially when first setting up filters, as it's permanent after 30 days.
- **Never send it to Spam:** This is usually for *legitimate* emails that Gmail sometimes wrongly puts into your Spam folder. You wouldn't use this for actual spam you want to block.
- **Always mark it as important / Never mark it as important:** Helps train Gmail's own "Important" inbox.
- **Categorize as:** Puts the email into one of Gmail's built-in categories (Social, Promotions, Updates, Forums).
- **Also apply a filter to matching conversations:** This is key! If you check this box, the filter will *immediately* apply to any emails already in your inbox that match your criteria, not just future ones.

Step 6: Create the Filter!

Once you've selected your actions, click **"Create filter"** again to save it.

A Few More Tips:

- **Start small:** Begin with a few simple filters and see how they work. You can always edit or delete them later.

- **Be specific, then broaden:** If you're getting a lot of spam from one sender, block that specific sender first. If that's not enough, try blocking keywords or parts of their domain.
- **Review your spam folder:** Even with filters, always take a quick look at your regular "Spam" folder every now and then. Sometimes legitimate emails can end up there by mistake, and you can mark them as "Not Spam" to help train Gmail.
- **"Unsubscribe" links:** For legitimate newsletters you no longer want, always try to use the "Unsubscribe" link first. For obvious spam, don't click it, as it can sometimes confirm your email is active.

Creating filters is a bit of a learning process, but it really helps keep your inbox clean!