

IMAP vs. SMTP: What Are They And What Are The Differences?

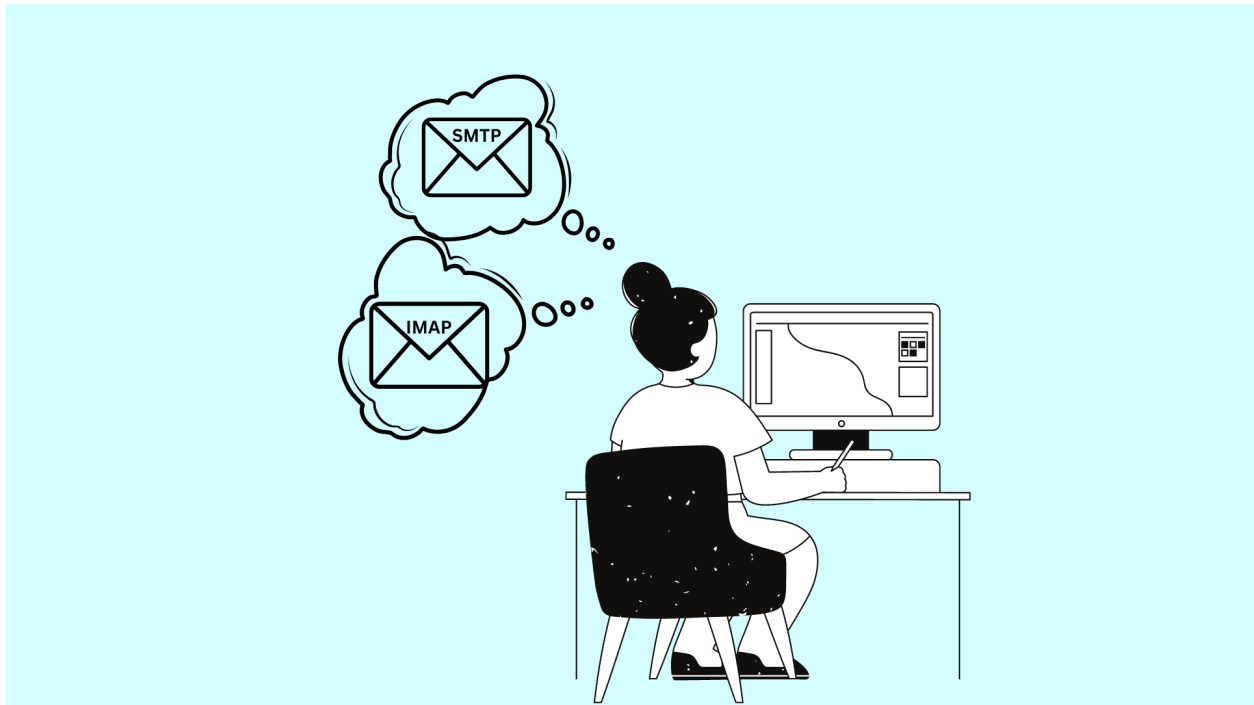


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Send emails frequently? Well, then you should know how it works! The number of emails sent and received per day in 2023 is **347.3 billion** and the automation of emails makes it so much easier. To better understand the magic behind email delivery we just need to look at the two spells IMAP and SMTP that allows us the power to do so.

SMTP and IMAP are the two main protocols that allow you to send and receive emails. Though they both may seem similar, there are differences between the two and that is exactly what we are going to explore today.

We are going to look at the workings of IMAP and SMTP, how they differ from one another, how they work together, and what are their benefits.

You are going to be an email pro after this one!

What is SMTP?

Ever thought about what helps your email reach the other side? Well, it is none other than the SMTP, and it stands for Simple Mail Transfer Protocol.

It is a protocol that allows for communication from one computer to another by using email addresses. It allows various modes of communication including text, video, and audio messages. SMTP also provides error-handling capabilities by replying to error messages.

How does it work?

SMTP is what your email client (Gmail, Outlook, etc.) uses to send your email to your email server. The server is often hosted by the email service provider. If you are sending messages, once more SMTP is used by the email server to send your message to your recipient's email server.

It works between the servers. There are two types of servers in SMTP: Relays and Receivers.

Relays accept the user's emails to be routed to the recipient while the receivers deliver them to the inbox after accepting them from the relay server.

Let's magnify the process to see it all:

- SMTP client connects to the SMTP server.
- Email is transferred using the connection.
- The client and server terminate the connection.

SMTP PROTOCOL

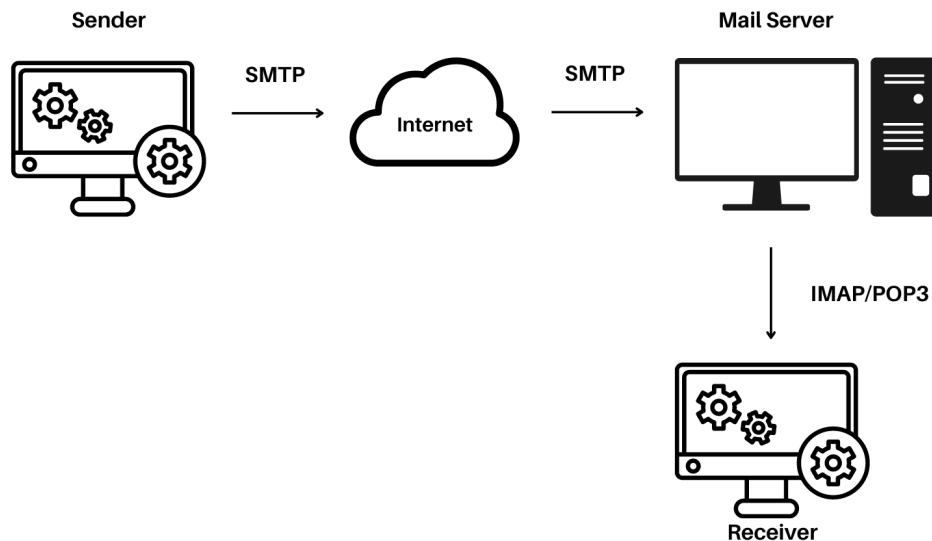


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What is IMAP?

IMAP stands for Internet Message Access Protocol and its main purpose is to receive email messages. What makes IMAP significant is the fact that it allows you to receive your email on more than one computer.

How does it work?

Once you receive an email it stays on the mail server so you can view it from wherever you wish such as a phone, tablet, etc. Let's get in deeper to see how this works:

- The email client (receiver) connects with the server where the message is stored.
- Based on the header the receiver selects which message to view from the server.
- IMAP then proceeds to download the selected message for the recipient.

IMAP PROTOCOL

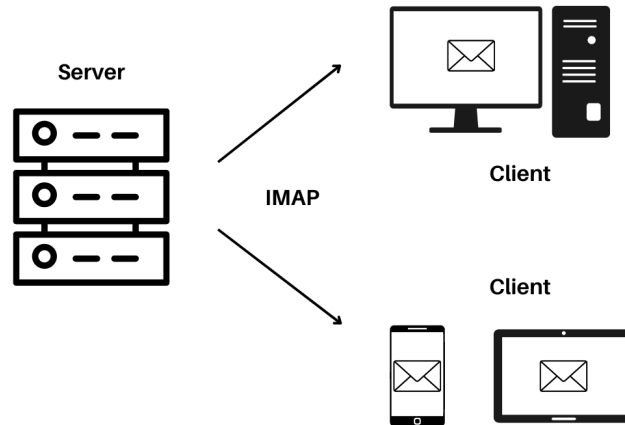


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Showing only the header rather than the entire message allows for a faster initial connection and saves some time.

How are they different and how do they work together?

SMTP	IMAP
To send emails from one server to another.	To receive emails or retrieve emails for recipients.
Functions between server to transfer information.	Functions between client and server.
Users can organize mails on client storage.	Users can organize mail onto the server.
Only for sending emails.	Allows for flexible viewing of information across multiple devices.

Consider them as a well-oiled machine where they work together to complete a particular task and the task here is sending and receiving an email. SMTP is used when you are sending an email whereas IMAP comes into play while you are receiving an email.

So, let's say you cannot come to work on Monday and have to inform of your absence to your boss, how would you do it? Email him of course!

You get on your laptop, type it out, and hit send. The email then zooms off to the internet helped by the SMTP and then finally dropped off to your boss's email server.

IMAP picks it up from the server and drops it off to your boss. He then gets a notification and seeing in the header that it is from you, clicks on it. The moment he selects the header, IMAP understands that he wishes to see the entire email and downloads it on his device, completing the process.

Going in deeper and wrapping it up

Now, let's have a final look at it all.

Sending and receiving emails may be great fun but no conversation can begin without prompting it into existence, that's why having an in-depth understanding of SMTP matters so much since without SMTP we cannot send our emails. SMTP works between servers, which means if you are a person who has to send a lot of emails, you may even need to automate it.

This is where you may need an email automation tool that will help schedule your emails on the server and deliver them. Here is where SMTP servers work, email automation tools host their own servers and help make this task easier, and since email marketing tools use multiple tools they deliver mail quicker and more efficiently.

A well-designed SMTP server can bring attention to your email campaigns and gather a larger number of responses. Such as the fact that if you use your own client's SMTP server you can send your email campaign directly to their primary inbox rather than the promotion inbox making it more likely for the client to read it.

Who knew sending emails had so much to it, but look at you soaking it all up with such ease. Now that you know all that there is to know about sending and receiving emails, go out there and start up your own campaign!