

Chapter 1

Make: A Virtual Assistant

In the 21st century, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the amount of information available on the Internet. In this exercise, you'll learn how to utilize a "virtual assistant" that can alert you when important events you are concerned about happen.

1 EXPLORE IFTTT



[Learn more](#) [Sign in](#)

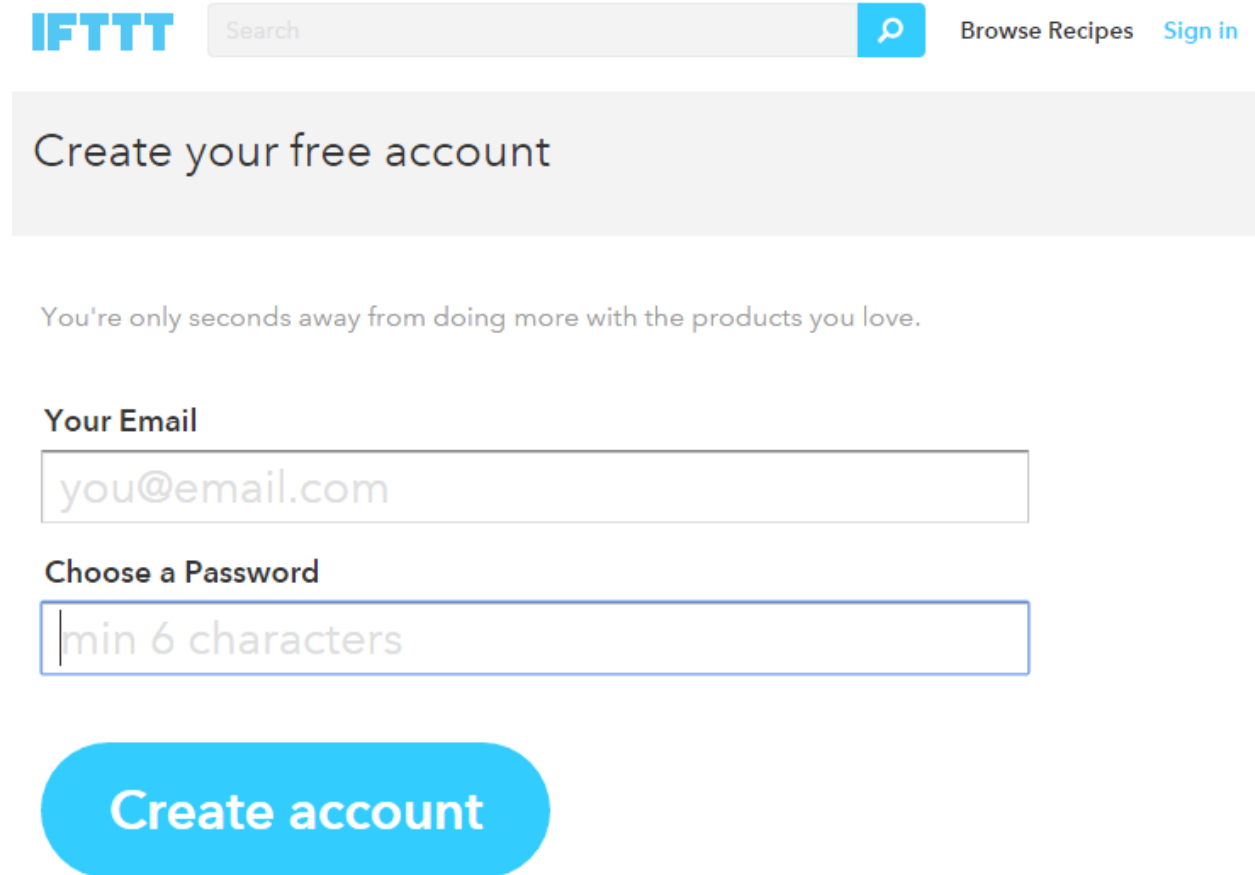
Put the internet to work for you.

Join IFTTT

IFTTT (ifttt.com) is a web service that allows you to create simple *recipes* joining together two different activities. IFTTT is an acronym for a programming term: IF This, Then That. If *this* (event 1) happens, then *that* (event 2) happens. The first event is known as the *trigger*. If the first event occurs (it is *triggered*), then the second event (known as the *action*) will take place. You can browse through pre-made lists of recipes and start using them right away, or you can create your own custom IFTTT recipes. Familiarizing yourself with IFTTT recipes is an excellent way to ease yourself into computer programming.

STEP 1: CREATE AN ACCOUNT ON IFTTT.COM

Navigate to <https://ifttt.com> and click the **Sign Up** link. Then fill in the requested information and click the **Create account** button.



The screenshot shows the IFTTT website's sign-up interface. At the top, the IFTTT logo is on the left, followed by a search bar with the placeholder text "Search". To the right of the search bar are links for "Browse Recipes" and "Sign in". Below this is a large grey banner with the text "Create your free account". Underneath the banner, a message reads: "You're only seconds away from doing more with the products you love." The form consists of two input fields: "Your Email" with the placeholder "you@email.com" and "Choose a Password" with the placeholder "min 6 characters". Below these fields is a prominent blue button with the text "Create account".

This confirmation page appears:



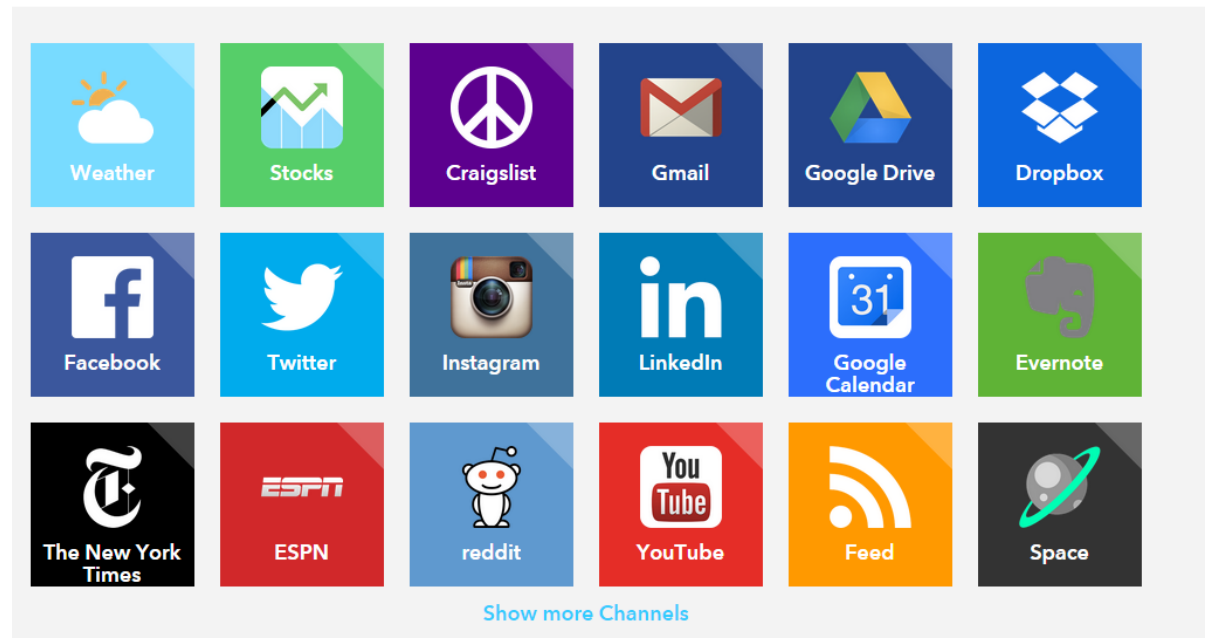
Make powerful connections with a simple phrase:



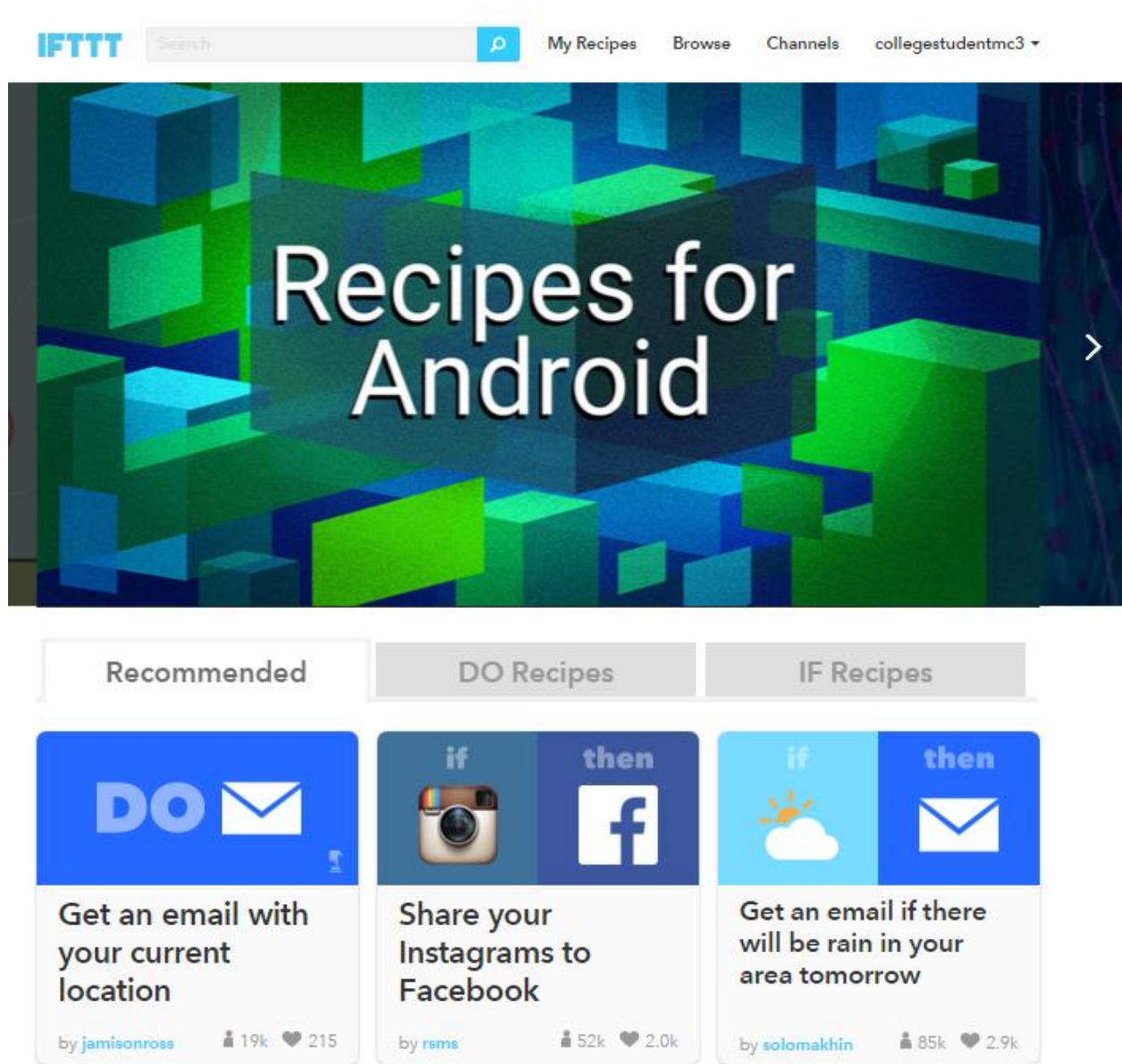
Click this to continue. You will then click through several screens that describe the IFTTT process until you reach this screen:



Select Channels that interest you



Selecting three channels from this screen allows you to continue. IFTTT will then present you with some pre-constructed recipes that you might like (your screen will vary depending on which categories you selected):



On the above screen, click the white arrow. This allows you to browse some of the collections of existing recipes. For example, if you love astronomy, check out the Recipes for Outer Space collection.



IFTTT can work with over 120 different services (or **channels**). These include channels that communicate with your Android or iOS phone, with popular web services like Dropbox, eBay, and Facebook, and even with smart hardware devices like the Nest thermostat or the Phillips HUE light bulb.

STEP 2: EXPLORE A PRE-DESIGNED RECIPE

Let's investigate a pre-designed recipe from the collection Recipes for Following the News. Click the Browse link on the top of the page and enter "president law" in the search box, then press the **Search** button (magnifying glass).

From the search results, click the one entitled “Get an email when the president signs a bill into law” by the Sunlight Foundation. The Sunlight Foundation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for open government.

Results for "president law"

◀ Back to Browse Recipes

33 Recipes found

if

then





Get an email when the president signs a bill into law

by [sunlightfoun...](#) 👤 26k ❤️ 889

if

then





Create a spreadsheet of new laws, eliminating the need for countless Washington, DC interns

by [sunlightfoun...](#) 👤 582 ❤️ 32

if

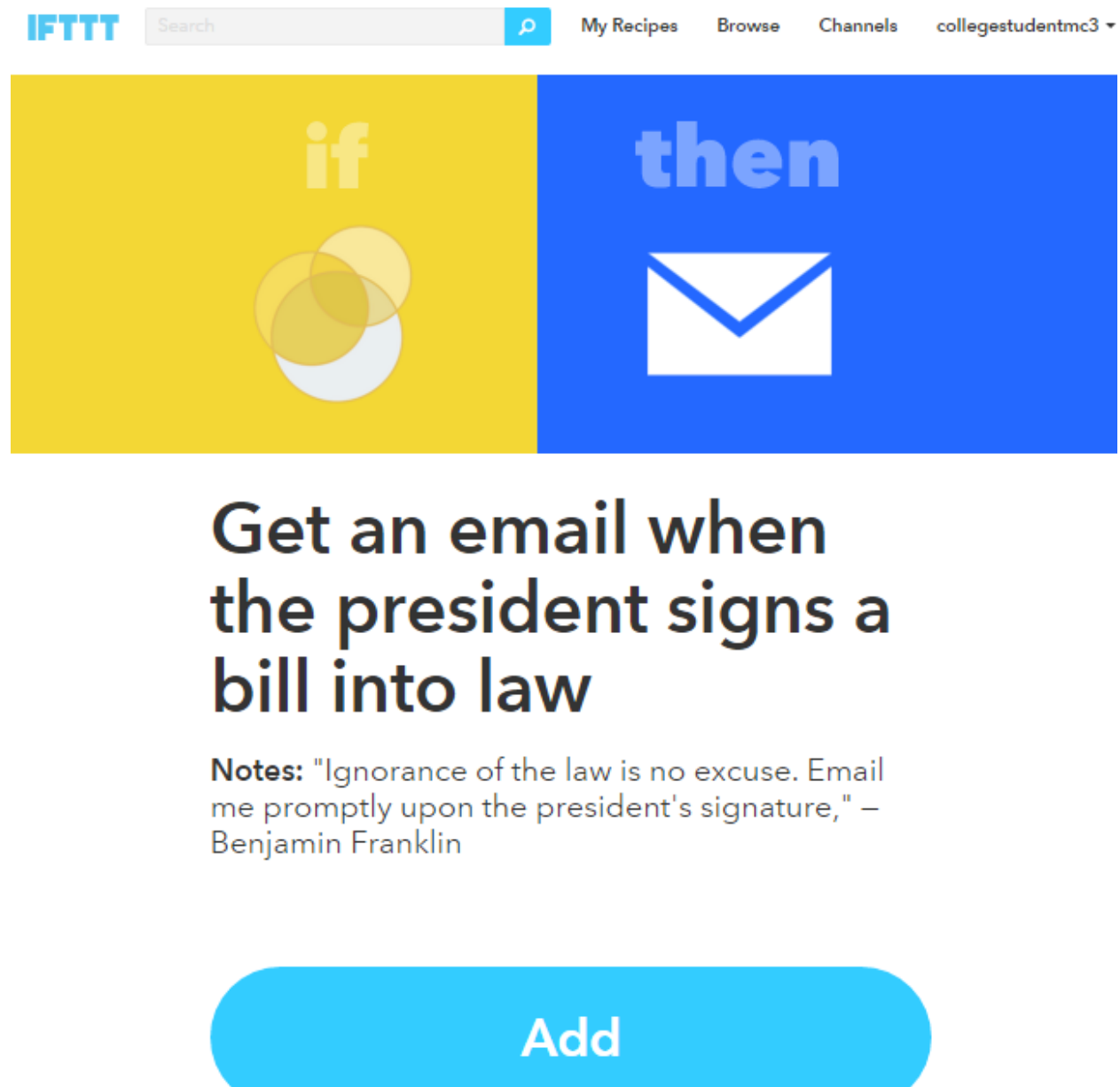
then



Post new U.S. laws to my Tumblr

by [sunlightfoun...](#) 👤 70 ❤️ 13

On the next screen, click the **Add button**. This adds the recipe to your list and activates it.



Now click the **My Recipes** link at the top of the screen. You'll see a list of all your active recipes.

IFTTT

Search

My Recipes

Browse

Channels

collegestudentmc3

My Recipes

IF

DO

Published

Favorites

IF Recipes run automatically in the background.

Create a Recipe

if

then

created 1 minute ago
never run

Get an email when the president signs a bill into law

Quick reminder: When you turn a Recipe off then back on, it resets as if you had just created it.



Clicking the edit icon allows you to edit some aspects of the recipe and view more details about the recipe. This recipe will email you whenever the president signs a new bill into law. Want to know if the recipe is working. Click the **Check now** button and then check your e-mail.

IFTTT

Search

My Recipes

Browse

Channels

collegestudentmc3

Recipe ID 34445070

Back to My Recipes

if

then

The president signs a new bill into law

Send me an email at collegestudentmc3@google.com

Recipe Title

Get an email when the president signs a bill into law

use '#' to add tags

Turn off

Publish

Check now

Log

Delete

created 4 minutes ago
never run

Recipe based on

Get an email when the president signs a bill into law

by sunlightfoundation

Tweet

Share

Email


STEP 4: CUSTOMIZE A PRE-DESIGNED RECIPE

The bottom of the screen shows the details of the recipe, including the text of the e-mail you will receive. You can modify it if you wish.


Action

Send me an email

This Action will send you an HTML based email. Images and links are supported.

 **Subject**

The president signed `Code` into law

 **Body**



The president signed `Code` into law on
`BecameLawOn` `

<i> Code -`
`Title </i>

Sponsor
`
`SponsorName

`
Read more on `<a href="`
`OfficialURL ">OpenCongress`

Update

Now you can customize the exact text that will be in the body of the message. Click inside the Body message box to display the  icon. Clicking the  will present a list of **ingredients**, or pieces of information, that can be included in the email (such as a URL linking to the law). Click the **Update** button to save any changes you made to your recipe.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Here are some suggestions for additional activities to pursue on your own.

- a) **Explore Other Collections and Recipes:** Browse through the other collections of recipes such as *Music Lovers* or those based on the *Internet of Things*. See what other useful recipes you can find that have been created by others.
- b) **Create a Recipe from Scratch:** At the top of the screen, click on your user name and then select **Create** from the dropdown list. Click “**This**” to get started. Choose the Trigger channel and activate it (this may include downloading the IFTTT app for mobile devices). Then fill out any required information. For example, you can set a trigger on Android Location and have an alert be raised whenever your phone enters a specific area. Next click “**THAT**” to see a list of channels that provide actions. Select the channel that provides the action you require based on your trigger. For instance, you could choose Google drive channel and have a new row added to a spreadsheet each time you go to the gym.