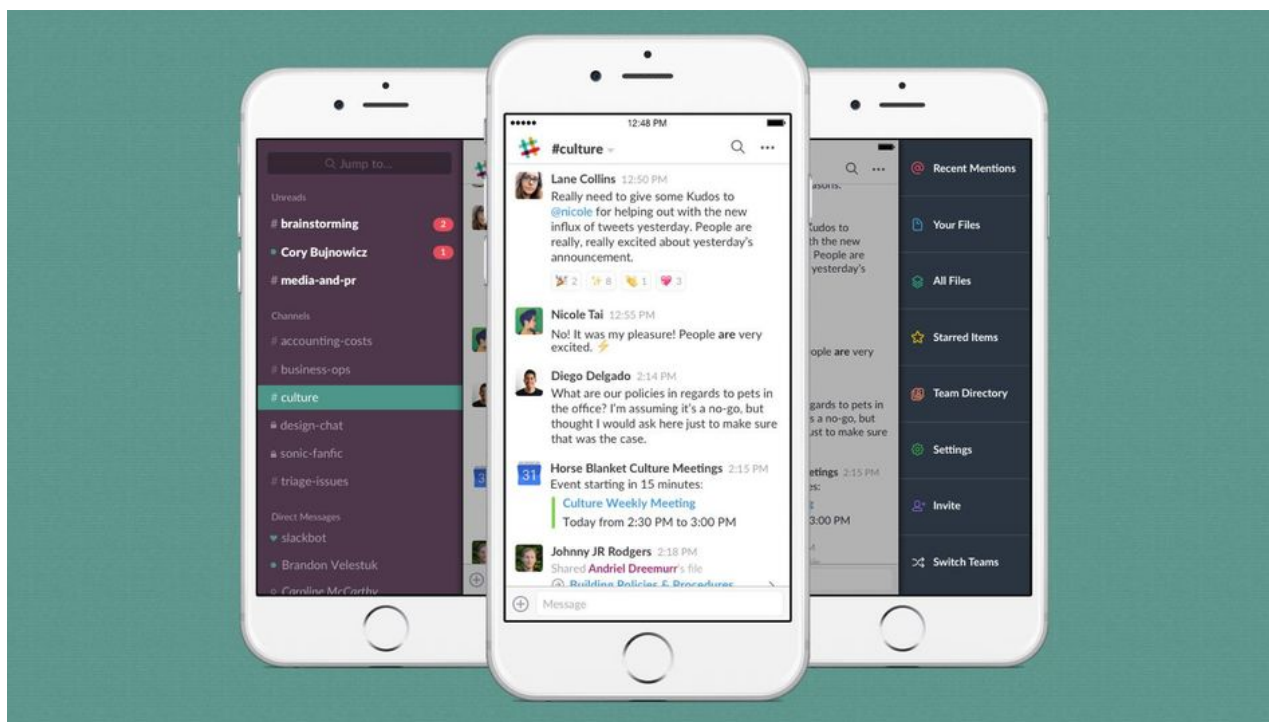


How to master Slack at your office



The key to a smoother work life? Being a total Slacker.

Image: Slack

I'm a Slack convert. Slack is my best friend. OK, not quite, though I'm entirely open to the idea that Slackbot is sentient.

There's more to the popular work app than chat, but you have to know how to use it. If your office is on Slack, a few hacks and shortcuts will make work life much better. So much better.

Here's how to get there.

1. Download the desktop app

Slack exists in two forms on desktop: through your browser, like Chrome, and through the dedicated app, which you can get from the iTunes store. Browser Slack is for n00bs. Everything is better, faster and more sophisticated with [the app](#).

2. Make it your own

First things first: Get comfortable.

Upload your photo and make sure your username, name and job title are set. As digital communication continues to replace in-person meetings and even phone calls, your online presence — even your avatar and job title — becomes more important. "jplautz" is not going to make the same impression as "Jessica" when an alert pops up on my coworker's screen.

And pick your favorite color:

Your preferences for Mashable

Notifications

Messages & Media

Sidebar Theme

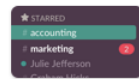
Search

Read State Tracking

Advanced Options

Sidebar Theme

Customize the look of the Mashable team. Only you will see this.



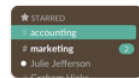
☐ Aubergine



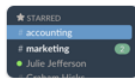
☐ Hoth



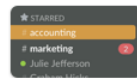
☐ Monument



☐ Choco Mint

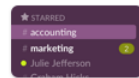


☒ Ochin

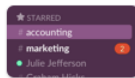


☐ Work Hard

Accessible Themes



☐ Protanopia &
Deuteranopia



☐ Tritanopia

Feeling adventurous?

[Customize your theme and share it with others](#)

3. Choose your channels wisely

First, a note to anyone setting up Slack for an organization : Approach channel creation *with a plan*.

It's easy for channels to get out of hand, and everything works better if there's a structure in place. At *Mashable*, we have beat-specific channels (for Travel, Tech, Business, Entertainment and others), as well as a main chat for the newsroom. Other departments organize themselves how they want, and then each office (e.g. the New York City headquarters) has a channel for location-specific updates.

Now for everyone: You should join all the channels that have something that applies to you. Don't be afraid to join a channel for fear of getting too many notifications. (We'll address that momentarily.)

You can keep some favorite or frequently used channels at the top of your side menu by starring them. To star a channel, look at the menu at the top left next to the channel name. There will be a star there you can click, and an option to star in the menu when you mouse over.

Star the channels you always use to keep them at the top of your side menu, then go to Preferences > Advanced Options > Channel List to set hide channels when there are no unread messages. Select "Hide any channels, etc., which have no unread activity, unless they are starred."

Notifications
Messages & Media
Sidebar Theme
Search
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Advanced Options

Input Options

- ☒ Enable spellcheck on your messages
- ☒ Only show autocomplete for people when the '@' character is used
- ☐ When typing code with ```, Enter should not send the message
With this checked use Shift+Enter to send
- ☐ Use ⌘ and ⌘ to cycle through your typed history
With this checked, use Cmd + ⌘ to edit your last message

Channel List

Hide any channels, etc., which have no unread activity, unless they are starred

- ☐ List public and private channels separately (mobile coming soon)

Other Options

- ☒ Page up, Page down, Home, and End keys always scroll messages
- ☒ Hide the quick switcher in the channel list
- ☒ Ask if I want to toggle my away status when I log in after having set myself away
- ☐ Surprise me!

You might also want to change some [debugging preferences](#).

That'll turn this hot mess:

The screenshot shows a Slack interface with a dark sidebar on the left. The sidebar contains a list of channels under the 'Mashable' workspace. The channels listed are: # headline-huddle, # slackbot-testing, # team-breakingnews, # team-edit-main, # team-editors, # team-travel (highlighted), # adminannouncements, # general, # it-help, # mashgives, # mashreads, # mashesourcing, # news-bots, # newsroom-tools, # nyoffice, # pinterest-pitch, # snapchat-pitch, # social-pitch, # team-business, # team-entertainment, # team-india, # team-lifestyle, # team-mpp, # team-politics, # team-science, # team-socialgood, # team-tech, and # team-uk. Below the channels is a 'MORE UNREADS' button. The main channel view on the right is titled '#team-travel' and shows a list of messages. The messages are from Jessica Plautz, slackbot, and Brian Ries. The messages are: 'This is ñöt the New Yörker. Dön't use ümlauts únless appropriate før the use of æ', 'style cher', 'FABULOUS!!!', 'dear slackbot is jessica also fabulous', 'Without a doubt.', 'slackbot tell me a joke', 'Yes. Definitely.', 'slackbot tell me a joke', 'Are you kidding?', 'no', 'pls', 'pls bot', 'who's on first?', 'Yes.', 'I'm asking you who's on first', and 'That's the man's name'. The messages are displayed in a list with avatars and timestamps. The interface is cluttered and lacks a clean, modern design.

Into this sleek gorgeousness:

Mashable

Jessica Plautz

★ STARRED

headline-huddle

slackbot-testing

team-breakingnews

team-edit-main

team-editors

team-travel

CHANNELS (71)

news-bots

team-entertainment

team-lifestyle

team-mpp

team-watercooler


published


DIRECT MESSAGES (349)

🔔


★ #team-travel


Today


 This is ñöt the New Yörker. Dön't use ümlauts ünless appropriate før the use of a

**Jessica Plautz** 15:24


style cher

slackbot 15:24


FABULOUS!!! 🐱🐱💖

**Jessica Plautz** 15:25


dear slackbot is jessica also fabulous

slackbot 15:25


Without a doubt.

**Brian Ries** 15:32


slackbot tell me a jokce

slackbot 15:32


Yes. Definitely.

**Brian Ries** 15:32

slackbot tell me a joke

slackbot 15:32


Are you kidding?

**Brian Ries** 15:32 ☆


no

pls


pls bot

**Jessica Plautz** 15:33


who's on first?

slackbot 15:33

Yes.

**Jessica Plautz** 15:33

I'm asking you who's on first

slackbot 15:33

That's the man's name

+

For each channel you are in, you can customize what alerts you want to get. For example, I get notifications for all messages in my Travel channel, but only notifications for my name and highlight words (which we'll get to soon) in other channels.

Notification Preferences: #team-travel

Desktop notifications

Activity of any kind (default)

Mentions of my name or highlight words

Nothing

Mobile push notifications

Activity of any kind

Mentions of my name or highlight words (default)

Nothing

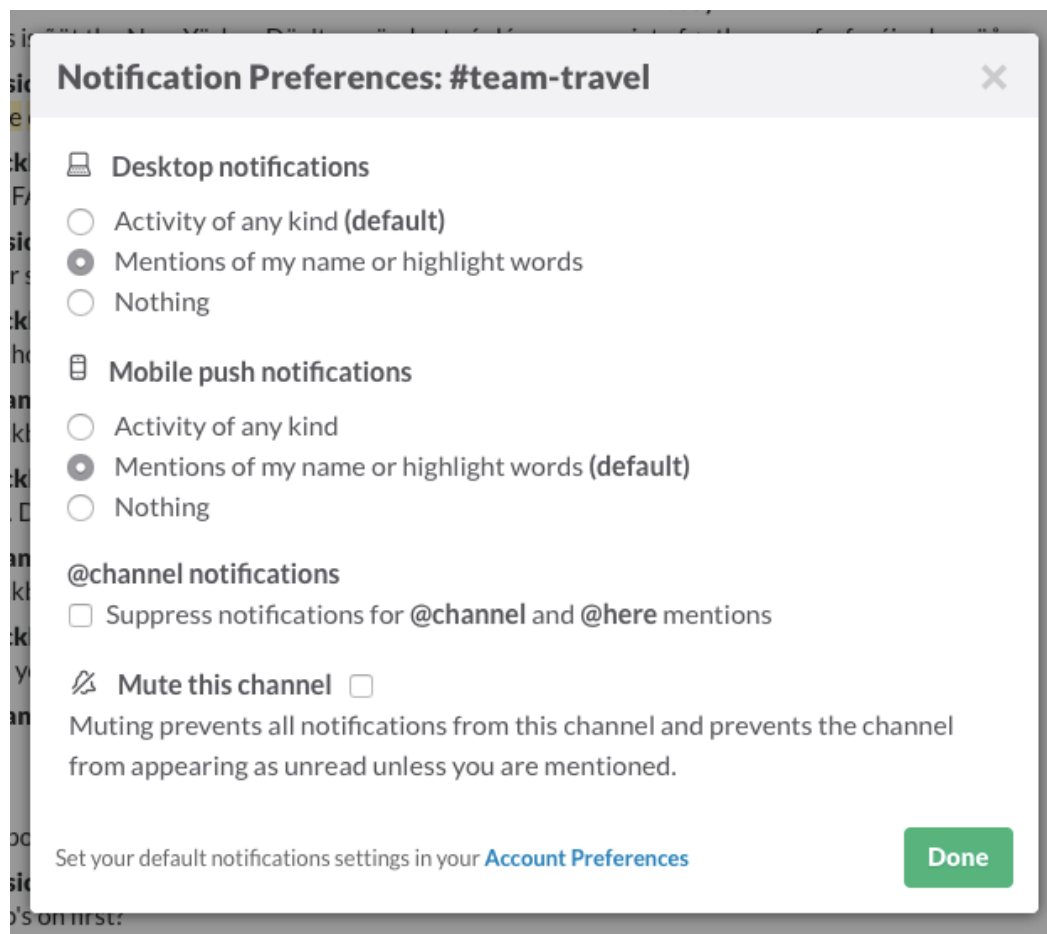
Mute this channel

Muting prevents all notifications from this channel and prevents the channel from appearing as unread unless you are mentioned.

Set your default notifications settings in your [Account Preferences](#)

Done

This way I'll get a desktop and mobile notification for everything in the channel.



And this way I'll only get a notification when I'm mentioned (and can mute @here and @channel notifications).

If you don't want to get a notification when someone says "@here" or "@channel" (which tend to be broad, nonspecific questions and requests) you can also set that to mute in the channel preferences.

When you don't care about what's been said in channels while you've been away, and want the Slack version of Inbox Zero, just hit the shortcut **SHIFT + ESCAPE**. *Voila*.

4. Alert! Alert! Alert!

My number one tip for Slack notifications: Turn off sounds. They're aural garbage that's annoying to everyone but you.

I'm a big fan of the pop-up desktop alert, though. By default, Slack will alert you to mentions of your @username, but you'll need to add the other highlight words you want to hear about. Since I cover travel, I ask Slack to alert me any time someone says "travel," "tourism," "airplane," "hotel," and related words.

Notifications

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Advanced Options

☒ Mute all sounds

Includes system alerts and notifications for messages

Notification Display

☒ Show message text in notifications

Uncheck for additional privacy

Dock App Icon

☒ Show symbol on icon to indicate unread activity

☐ Bounce dock icon when showing a notification

☒ Bounce it just once

Send test notification

Highlight Words

To be notified when someone mentions a word or phrase, add it here. You can separate words or phrases with commas. Highlight Words are not case sensitive.

jessica, jess, plautz, travel, plane, airplane, airplanes, airport, airline, airlines, jetb

Recently, Slack changed mentions for people's names. While by default Slack used to tell me every time someone said "Jessica," (even when they meant Jessica Biel or Jessica Jones), now it will only provide an alert if you add your name to the highlight words. I added mine back — even though Biel and Jones are tres annoying — but you can leave yours out if constant mentions are getting annoying. Popularity, it's such a burden.

Highlight words should be curated with time. I used to include "train," and then got an alert every time someone in the office complained about the L train. So I removed "train," added "Amtrak," and life has improved. (At least for me. My colleagues who live on the L line still seem as unhappy with it as ever).

There's also a recently added feature on Slack that lets admins set off hours, with a default for 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. If your entire office is going for some higher level of work/life balance, an administrator can set these hours for everyone. If you want to set your own hours, though, you can. This will keep an errant mention at 11 p.m. from ruining your family time or Netflix viewing time.

Notifications

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Advanced Options



Notification Settings




Send notifications for: All activity **Sound:** Off (muted) **Display:** Show text

Dock app icon: Show icon



Do Not Disturb



When Do Not Disturb is activated, Slack won't send desktop, mobile, or email notifications. You can manually snooze notifications by clicking the  icon by your name.

☐ Automatically disable notifications from:

22:00

to

08:00

Eastern Standard Time ([change](#))

5. Make use of search

Remember something discussed a while ago? Search for it. About to share something that may have been shared before? Search for it.

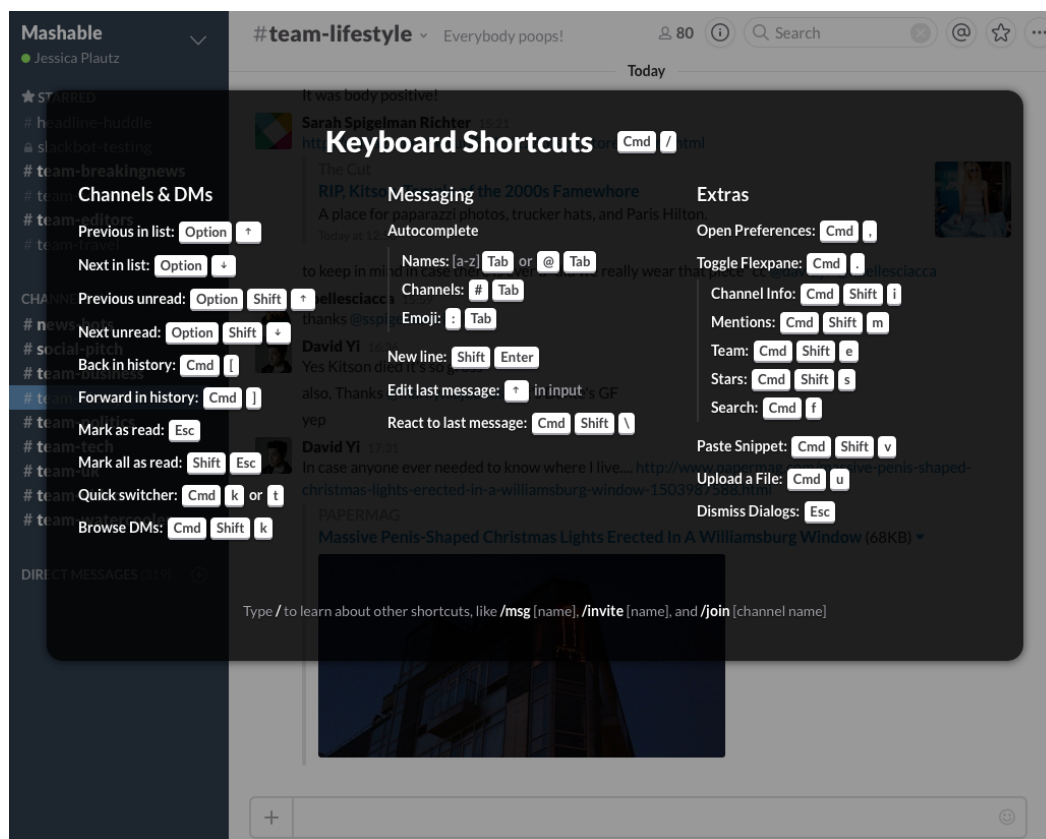
COMMAND + F will bring up the search dialogue, or you can waste valuable fractions of a second and move your pointer to click in the search field before you start typing.

A note: Consider all messages — in channels, groups and one-to-one messages — as saved in Slack. Don't have conversations you wouldn't want your company to see, even in a direct message.

6. And make use of more shortcuts

You don't need all the shortcuts — but the most useful ones will improve your life.

COMMAND + / See the list of all the shortcuts.



COMMAND + K - switch between channels and DMs. This is MUCH FASTER than looking for a channel's or person's name in the sidebar. Just start typing and hit enter once the name is highlighted in blue.

ESCAPE - mark a single channel as read

SHIFT + ESCAPE - mark all channels and DMs as read (it's like inbox zero but faster)

COMMAND + SHIFT + M - see a list of all your recent mentions

7. Set an office policy for mentions

There are two sides to every mention. The person mentioned, and the person who is doing the mentioning. If the

person mentioned doesn't want to get an alert, they should turn desktop and mobile alerts off.

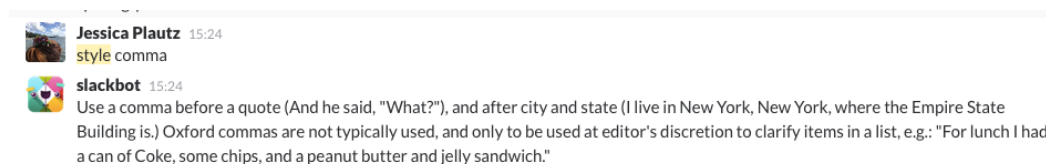
Meanwhile, the person doing the mentioning should think about a few things: What time is it? Is the message vital? Is it office policy to be on call, or is there a better way to send the message? What expectations are there for responding to mentions?

Some of these questions are more pertinent in a newsroom, where late breaking news can bring otherwise idle staff out of the woodwork, but all offices will benefit from being transparent about expectations. Discuss what the best mentioning/responding policy is for your office — even if there's no written policy, discussing best practices will encourage better slack relationships.

8. Get customized

One reason Slack is so great is that there are so many integrations. Seriously: [Check them out.](#)

Even the default Slackbot tool can do a lot for you. At Mashable, I've set our Slackbot to be an easy-reference newsroom style guide, which tells us how we should write headlines and frequently used words. "Style" + a keyword will bring up our rules for story style:



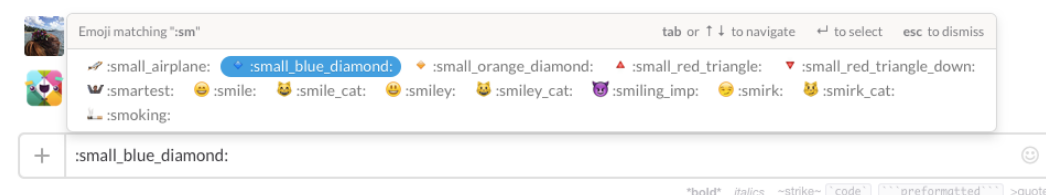
9. Set reminders for yourself or your team

Start a message with `/remind` to set [an in-Slack alert](#):

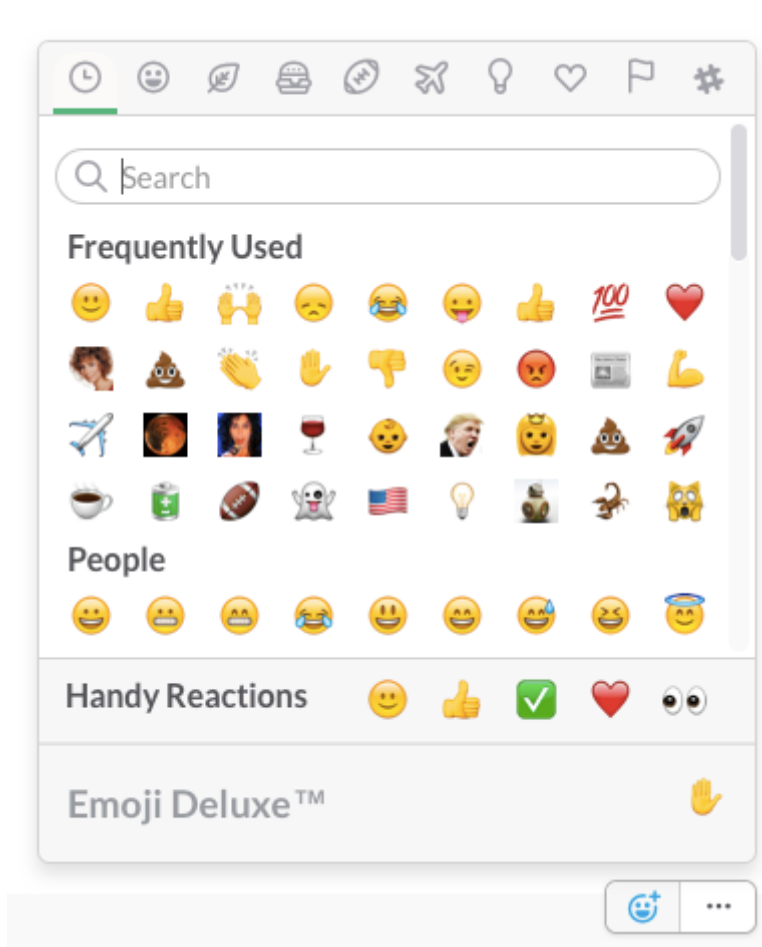
/remind me to book my airline ticket at 2pm/remind @milton to give me back the red stapler in 3 hours/remind #editorial to put in lunch orders at 11am every weekday

10. Use emoji when words do not express

Using emoji at work is [an art](#), but one worth mastering. In Slack, you can use emoji both in the chat box — by starting with ":" and beginning to type the name of an emoji to bring up a menu:



And you can also use emoji to react to messages from other team members. Just hover over the message, click the smiley face, and search for the proper emoji:



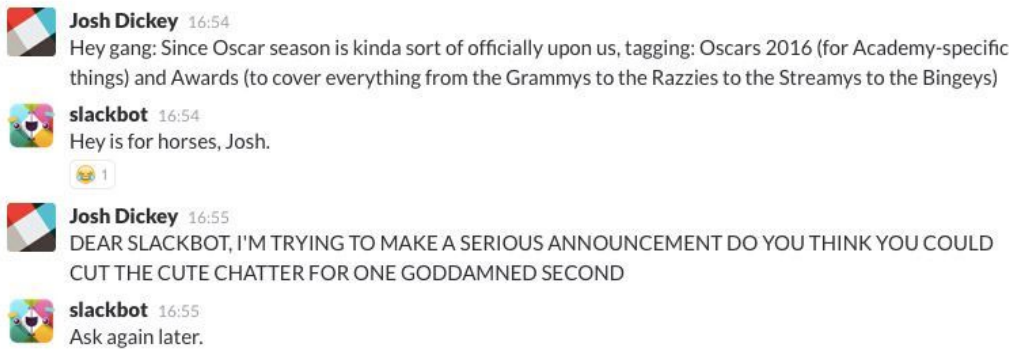
11. Have some fun with it

If you're an administrator, Slackbot can quickly inherit your sense of humor. (I taught slackbot "[Who's on first?](#)" and "[The babe with the power.](#)")

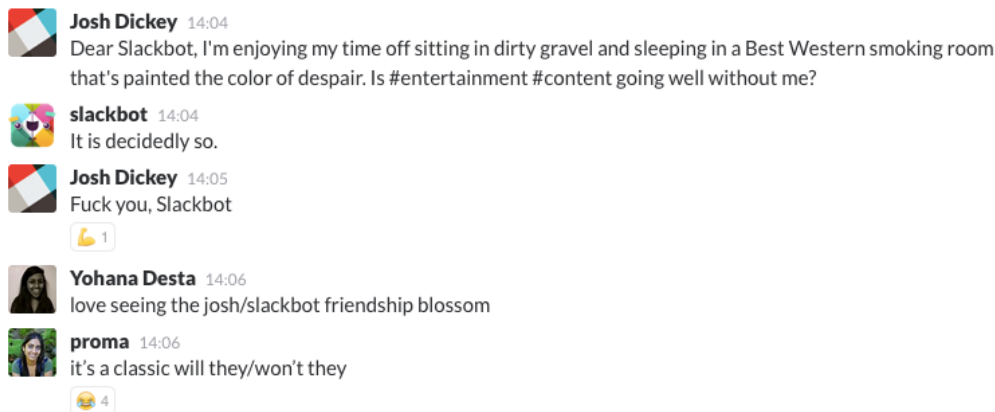
This is incredibly useful for pranks. (Good hearted pranks, people; don't pull malicious crap at work.) Like if someone says "dammit," Slackbot might respond:



And, as another example, if one specific co-worker has a habit of using a phrase — let's say, just for fun, "hey gang" — that other co-workers rarely use, you could create a Slackbot response specifically for them. Sorry, Josh.



And I'm not that sorry, because I may just be playing the role of matchmaker.



What the above examples also show is the ability to make Slackbot a Magic 8 Ball. Who else would you turn to for answers to life's big questions if not the all-knowing, all-seeing Slackbot?

You may be surprised to know that what I've touched on here is just the beginning. [Custom Slack integrations](#) can do so much more.

Have a Slack hack you love? Share it in the comments