



# 18

## SENDING EMAIL AND TEXT MESSAGES



Checking and replying to email is a huge time sink. Of course, you can't just write a program to handle all your email for you, since each message requires its own response. But you can still automate plenty of email-related tasks once you know how to write programs that can send and receive email.

For example, maybe you have a spreadsheet full of customer records and want to send each customer a different form letter depending on their age and location details. Commercial software might not be able to do this for you; fortunately, you can write your own program to send these emails, saving yourself a lot of time copying and pasting form emails.

You can also write programs to send emails and SMS texts to notify you of things even while you're away from your computer. If you're automating a task that takes a couple of hours to do, you don't want to go back to your computer every few minutes to check on the program's status. Instead, the program can just text your phone when it's done—freeing you to focus on more important things while you're away from your computer.

This chapter features the EZGmail module, a simple way to send and read emails from Gmail accounts, as well as a Python module for using the standard SMTP and IMAP email protocols.

## WARNING

*I highly recommend you set up a separate email account for any scripts that send or receive emails. This will prevent bugs in your programs from affecting your personal email account (by deleting emails or accidentally spamming your contacts, for example). It's a good idea to first do a dry run by commenting out the code that actually sends or deletes emails and replacing it with a temporary `print()` call. This way you can test your program before running it for real.*

## SENDING AND RECEIVING EMAIL WITH THE GMAIL API

Gmail owns close to a third of the email client market share, and most likely you have at least one Gmail email address. Because of additional security and anti-spam measures, it is easier to control a Gmail account through the *EZGmail module* than through `smtplib` and `imapclient`, discussed later in this chapter. EZGmail is a module I wrote that works on top of the official Gmail API and provides functions that make it easy to use Gmail from Python. You can find full details on EZGmail at <https://github.com/asweigart/ezgmail/>. EZGmail is not produced by or affiliated with Google; find the official Gmail API documentation at <https://developers.google.com/gmail/api/v1/reference/>.

To install EZGmail, run `pip install --user --upgrade ezgmail` on Windows (or use `pip3` on macOS and Linux). The `--upgrade` option will ensure that you install the latest version of the package, which is necessary for interacting with a constantly changing online service like the Gmail API.

### ***Enabling the Gmail API***

Before you write code, you must first sign up for a Gmail email account at <https://gmail.com/>. Then, go to <https://developers.google.com/gmail/api/quickstart/python/>, click the **Enable the Gmail API** button on that page, and fill out the form that appears.

After you've filled out the form, the page will present a link to the *credentials.json* file, which you'll need to download and place in the same folder as your *.py* file. The *credentials.json* file contains the Client ID and Client Secret information, which you should treat the same as your Gmail password and not share with anyone else.

Then, in the interactive shell, enter the following code:

```
>>> import ezgmail, os
>>> os.chdir(r'C:\path\to\credentials_json_file')
>>> ezgmail.init()
```

---

Make sure you set your current working directory to the same folder that *credentials.json* is in and that you're connected to the internet. The `ezgmail.init()` function will open your browser to a Google sign-in page. Enter your Gmail address and password. The page may warn you “This app isn't verified,” but this is fine; click **Advanced** and then **Go to Quickstart (unsafe)**. (If you write Python scripts for others and don't want this warning appearing for them, you'll need to learn about Google's app verification process, which is beyond the scope of this book.) When the next page prompts you with “Quickstart wants to access your Google Account,” click **Allow** and then close the browser.

A *token.json* file will be generated to give your Python scripts access to the Gmail account you entered. The browser will only open to the login page if it can't find an existing *token.json* file. With *credentials.json* and *token.json*, your Python scripts can send and read emails from your Gmail account without requiring you to include your Gmail password in your source code.

## ***Sending Mail from a Gmail Account***

Once you have a *token.json* file, the EZGmail module should be able to send email with a single function call:

---

```
>>> import ezgmail
>>> ezgmail.send('recipient@example.com', 'Subject line', 'Body of the email')
```

---

If you want to attach files to your email, you can provide an extra list argument to the `send()` function:

---

```
>>> ezgmail.send('recipient@example.com', 'Subject line', 'Body of the email',
['attachment1.jpg', 'attachment2.mp3'])
```

---

Note that as part of its security and anti-spam features, Gmail might not send repeated emails with the exact same text (since these are likely spam) or emails that contain *.exe* or *.zip* file attachments (since they are likely viruses).

You can also supply the optional keyword arguments `cc` and `bcc` to send carbon copies and blind carbon copies:

```
>>> import ezgmail
>>> ezgmail.send('recipient@example.com', 'Subject line', 'Body of the email',
cc='friend@example.com', bcc='otherfriend@example.com,someoneelse@example.com')
```

---

If you need to remember which Gmail address the *token.json* file is configured for, you can examine `ezgmail.EMAIL_ADDRESS`. Note that this variable is populated only after `ezgmail.init()` or any other EZGmail function is called:

---

```
>>> import ezgmail
>>> ezgmail.init()
>>> ezgmail.EMAIL_ADDRESS
'example@gmail.com'
```

---

Be sure to treat the *token.json* file the same as your password. If someone else obtains this file, they can access your Gmail account (though they won't be able to change your Gmail password). To revoke previously issued *token.json* files, go to <https://security.google.com/settings/security/permissions?pli=1/> and revoke access to the Quickstart app. You will need to run `ezgmail.init()` and go through the login process again to obtain a new *token.json* file.

## ***Reading Mail from a Gmail Account***

Gmail organizes emails that are replies to each other into conversation threads. When you log in to Gmail in your web browser or through an app, you're really looking at email threads rather than individual emails (even if the thread has only one email in it).

EZGmail has `GmailThread` and `GmailMessage` objects to represent conversation threads and individual emails, respectively. A `GmailThread` object has a `messages` attribute that holds a list of `GmailMessage` objects. The `unread()` function returns a list of `GmailThread` objects for all unread emails, which can then be passed to `ezgmail.summary()` to print a summary of the conversation threads in that list:

---

```
>>> import ezgmail
>>> unreadThreads = ezgmail.unread() # List of GmailThread objects.
>>> ezgmail.summary(unreadThreads)
```

Al, Jon - Do you want to watch RoboCop this weekend? - Dec 09

Jon - Thanks for stopping me from buying Bitcoin. - Dec 09

---

The `summary()` function is handy for displaying a quick summary of the email threads, but to access specific messages (and parts of messages), you'll want to examine the `messages` attribute of the `GmailThread` object. The `messages` attribute contains a list of the `GmailMessage` objects that make up the thread, and these have `subject`, `body`, `timestamp`, `sender`, and `recipient` attributes that describe the email:

---

```
>>> len(unreadThreads)
2
>>> str(unreadThreads[0])
"<GmailThread len=2 snippet= Do you want to watch RoboCop this weekend?'"
>>> len(unreadThreads[0].messages)
2
>>> str(unreadThreads[0].messages[0])
"<GmailMessage from='Al Sweigart <al@inventwithpython.com>' to='Jon Doe
<example@gmail.com>' timestamp=datetime.datetime(2018, 12, 9, 13, 28, 48)
subject='RoboCop' snippet='Do you want to watch RoboCop this weekend?'"
>>> unreadThreads[0].messages[0].subject
'RoboCop'
>>> unreadThreads[0].messages[0].body
'Do you want to watch RoboCop this weekend?\r\n'
>>> unreadThreads[0].messages[0].timestamp
datetime.datetime(2018, 12, 9, 13, 28, 48)
>>> unreadThreads[0].messages[0].sender
'Al Sweigart <al@inventwithpython.com>'
>>> unreadThreads[0].messages[0].recipient
'Jon Doe <example@gmail.com>'
```

---

Similar to the `ezgmail.unread()` function, the `ezgmail.recent()` function will return the 25 most recent threads in your Gmail account. You can pass an optional `maxResults` keyword argument to change this limit:

---

```
>>> recentThreads = ezgmail.recent()
>>> len(recentThreads)
25
>>> recentThreads = ezgmail.recent(maxResults=100)
>>> len(recentThreads)
46
```

---

## Searching Mail from a Gmail Account

In addition to using `ezgmail.unread()` and `ezgmail.recent()`, you can search for specific emails, the same way you would if you entered queries into the <https://gmail.com/> search box, by calling `ezgmail.search()`:

---

```
>>> resultThreads = ezgmail.search('RoboCop')
>>> len(resultThreads)
1
>>> ezgmail.summary(resultThreads)
Al, Jon - Do you want to watch RoboCop this weekend? - Dec 09
```

---

The previous `search()` call should yield the same results as if you had entered “RoboCop” into the search box, as in Figure 18-1.

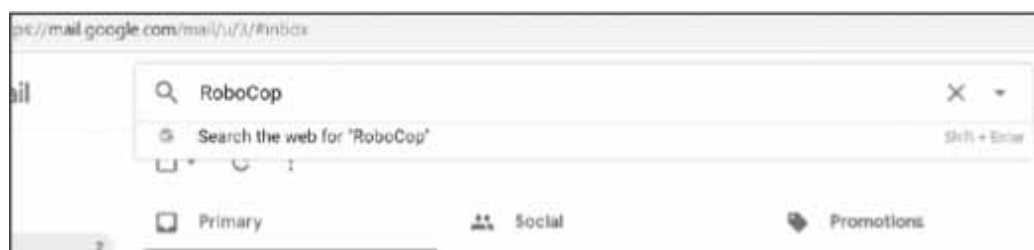


Figure 18-1: Searching for “RoboCop” emails at the Gmail website

Like `unread()` and `recent()`, the `search()` function returns a list of `GmailThread` objects. You can also pass any of the special search operators that you can enter into the search box to the `search()` function, such as the following:

- 'label:UNREAD' For unread emails
- 'from:al@inventwithpython.com' For emails from *al@inventwithpython.com*
- 'subject:hello' For emails with “hello” in the subject
- 'has:attachment' For emails with file attachments

You can view a full list of search operators at <https://support.google.com/mail/answer/7190?hl=en/>.

## Downloading Attachments from a Gmail Account

The `GmailMessage` objects have an `attachments` attribute that is a list of filenames for the message’s attached files. You can pass any of these names to a `GmailMessage` object’s `downloadAttachment()` method to download the files. You can also download all of them at once with `downloadAllAttachments()`. By default, EZGmail saves attachments to the

current working directory, but you can pass an additional `downloadFolder` keyword argument to `downloadAttachment()` and `downloadAllAttachments()` as well. For example:

---

```
>>> import ezgmail
>>> threads = ezgmail.search('vacation photos')
>>> threads[0].messages[0].attachments
['tulips.jpg', 'canal.jpg', 'bicycles.jpg']
>>> threads[0].messages[0].downloadAttachment('tulips.jpg')
>>> threads[0].messages[0].downloadAllAttachments(downloadFolder='vacat
ion2019')
['tulips.jpg', 'canal.jpg', 'bicycles.jpg']
```

---

If a file already exists with the attachment’s filename, the downloaded attachment will automatically overwrite it.

EZGmail contains additional features, and you can find the full documentation at <https://github.com/asweigart/ezgmail/>.

## SMTP

Much as HTTP is the protocol used by computers to send web pages across the internet, *Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP)* is the protocol used for sending email. SMTP dictates how email messages should be formatted, encrypted, and relayed between mail servers and all the other details that your computer handles after you click Send. You don’t need to know these technical details, though, because Python’s `smtplib` module simplifies them into a few functions.

SMTP just deals with sending emails to others. A different protocol, called IMAP, deals with retrieving emails sent to you and is described in “IMAP” on page 424.

In addition to SMTP and IMAP, most web-based email providers today have other security measures in place to protect against spam, phishing, and other malicious email usage. These measures prevent Python scripts from logging in to an email account with the `smtplib` and `imapclient` modules. However, many of these services have APIs and specific Python modules that allow scripts to access them. This chapter covers Gmail’s module. For others, you’ll need to consult their online documentation.

## SENDING EMAIL

You may be familiar with sending emails from Outlook or Thunderbird or through a website such as Gmail or Yahoo Mail. Unfortunately, Python doesn't offer you a nice graphical user interface like those services. Instead, you call functions to perform each major step of SMTP, as shown in the following interactive shell example.

## NOTE

*Don't enter this example in the interactive shell; it won't work, because smtp.example.com, bob@example.com, MY\_SECRET\_PASSWORD, and alice@example.com are just placeholders. This code is just an overview of the process of sending email with Python.*

```
>>> import smtplib
>>> smtpObj = smtplib.SMTP('smtp.example.com', 587)
>>> smtpObj.ehlo()
(250, b'mx.example.com at your service, [216.172.148.131]\nSIZE 35882577\n8BITMIME\nSTARTTLS\nENHANCEDSTATUSCODES\nCHUNKING')
>>> smtpObj.starttls()
(220, b'2.0.0 Ready to start TLS')
>>> smtpObj.login('bob@example.com', 'MY_SECRET_PASSWORD')
(235, b'2.7.0 Accepted')
>>> smtpObj.sendmail('bob@example.com', 'alice@example.com', 'Subject: So
long.\nDear Alice, so long and thanks for all the fish. Sincerely, Bob')
{}
>>> smtpObj.quit()
(221, b'2.0.0 closing connection ko10sm23097611pbd.52 - gsmtp')
```

In the following sections, we'll go through each step, replacing the placeholders with your information to connect and log in to an SMTP server, send an email, and disconnect from the server.

## Connecting to an SMTP Server

If you've ever set up Thunderbird, Outlook, or another program to connect to your email account, you may be familiar with configuring the SMTP server and port. These settings will be different for each email provider, but a web search for *<your provider> smtp settings* should turn up the server and port to use.



The domain name for the SMTP server will usually be the name of your email provider's domain name, with *smtp.* in front of it. For example, Verizon's SMTP server is at *smtp.verizon.net*. Table 18-1 lists some common email providers and their SMTP servers. (The port is an integer value and will almost always be 587. It's used by the command encryption standard, TLS.)

**Table 18-1:** Email Providers and Their SMTP Servers

Provider	SMTP server domain name
Gmail*	<i>smtp.gmail.com</i>
Outlook.com/Hotmail.com*	<i>smtp-mail.outlook.com</i>
Yahoo Mail*	<i>smtp.mail.yahoo.com</i>
AT&T	<i>smtp.mail.att.net</i> (port 465)
Comcast	<i>smtp.comcast.net</i>
Verizon	<i>smtp.verizon.net</i> (port 465)

\*Additional security measures prevent Python from being able to log in to these servers with the `smtplib` module. The EZGmail module can bypass this difficulty for Gmail accounts.

Once you have the domain name and port information for your email provider, create an SMTP object by calling `smtplib.SMTP()`, passing the domain name as a string argument, and passing the port as an integer argument. The SMTP object represents a connection to an SMTP mail server and has methods for sending emails. For example, the following call creates an SMTP object for connecting to an imaginary email server:

```
>>> smtpObj = smtplib.SMTP('smtp.example.com', 587)
>>> type(smtpObj)
<class 'smtplib.SMTP'>
```

Entering `type(smtpObj)` shows you that there's an SMTP object stored in `smtpObj`. You'll need this SMTP object in order to call the methods that log you in and send emails. If the `smtplib.SMTP()` call is not successful, your SMTP server might not support TLS on port 587. In this case, you will need to create an SMTP object using `smtplib.SMTP_SSL()` and port 465 instead.

```
>>> smtpObj = smtplib.SMTP_SSL('smtp.example.com', 465)
```

---

## NOTE

*If you are not connected to the internet, Python will raise a `socket.gaierror: [Errno 11004] getaddrinfo failed` or similar exception.*

For your programs, the differences between TLS and SSL aren't important. You only need to know which encryption standard your SMTP server uses so you know how to connect to it. In all of the interactive shell examples that follow, the `smtpObj` variable will contain an SMTP object returned by the `smtplib.SMTP()` or `smtplib.SMTP_SSL()` function.

## ***Sending the SMTP “Hello” Message***

Once you have the SMTP object, call its oddly named `ehlo()` method to “say hello” to the SMTP email server. This greeting is the first step in SMTP and is important for establishing a connection to the server. You don't need to know the specifics of these protocols. Just be sure to call the `ehlo()` method first thing after getting the SMTP object or else the later method calls will result in errors. The following is an example of an `ehlo()` call and its return value:

---

```
>>> smtpObj.ehlo()
(250, b'mx.example.com at your service, [216.172.148.131]\nSIZE 35882577\
n8BITMIME\nSTARTTLS\nENHANCEDSTATUSCODES\nCHUNKING')
```

---

If the first item in the returned tuple is the integer 250 (the code for “success” in SMTP), then the greeting succeeded.

## ***Starting TLS Encryption***

If you are connecting to port 587 on the SMTP server (that is, you're using TLS encryption), you'll need to call the `starttls()` method next. This required step enables encryption for your connection. If you are connecting to port 465 (using SSL), then encryption is already set up, and you should skip this step.

Here's an example of the `starttls()` method call:

---

```
>>> smtpObj.starttls()
(220, b'2.0.0 Ready to start TLS')
```

---

The `starttls()` method puts your SMTP connection in TLS mode. The 220 in the return value tells you that the server is ready.

## Logging In to the SMTP Server

Once your encrypted connection to the SMTP server is set up, you can log in with your username (usually your email address) and email password by calling the `login()` method.

---

```
>>> smtpObj.login('my_email_address@example.com', 'MY_SECRET_PASSWORD')
(235, b'2.7.0 Accepted')
```

---

Pass a string of your email address as the first argument and a string of your password as the second argument. The 235 in the return value means authentication was successful. Python raises an `smtplib.SMTPAuthenticationError` exception for incorrect passwords.

### WARNING

*Be careful about putting passwords in your source code. If anyone ever copies your program, they'll have access to your email account! It's a good idea to call `input()` and have the user type in the password. It may be inconvenient to have to enter a password each time you run your program, but this approach prevents you from leaving your password in an unencrypted file on your computer where a hacker or laptop thief could easily get it.*

## Sending an Email

Once you are logged in to your email provider's SMTP server, you can call the `sendmail()` method to actually send the email. The `sendmail()` method call looks like this:

---

```
>>> smtpObj.sendmail('my_email_address@example.com',
', 'recipient@example.com', 'Subject: So long.\nDear Alice, so long and thanks for all
the fish.
Sincerely, Bob')
{}
```

---

The `sendmail()` method requires three arguments:

- Your email address as a string (for the email's "from" address)

- The recipient's email address as a string, or a list of strings for multiple recipients (for the "to" address)
- The email body as a string

The start of the email body string *must* begin with 'Subject: \n' for the subject line of the email. The '\n' newline character separates the subject line from the main body of the email.

The return value from `sendmail()` is a dictionary. There will be one key-value pair in the dictionary for each recipient for whom email delivery *failed*. An empty dictionary means all recipients were *successfully* sent the email.

## ***Disconnecting from the SMTP Server***

Be sure to call the `quit()` method when you are done sending emails. This will disconnect your program from the SMTP server.

---

```
>>> smtpObj.quit()
(221, b'2.0.0 closing connection ko10sm23097611pbd.52 - gsmtp')
```

---

The 221 in the return value means the session is ending.

To review all the steps for connecting and logging in to the server, sending email, and disconnecting, see "Sending Email" on page 420.

## **IMAP**

Just as SMTP is the protocol for sending email, the *Internet Message Access Protocol* (IMAP) specifies how to communicate with an email provider's server to retrieve emails sent to your email address. Python comes with an `imaplib` module, but in fact the third-party `imapclient` module is easier to use. This chapter provides an introduction to using `IMAPClient`; the full documentation is at <https://imapclient.readthedocs.io/>.

The `imapclient` module downloads emails from an IMAP server in a rather complicated format. Most likely, you'll want to convert them from this format into simple string values. The `pyzmail` module does the hard job of parsing these email messages for you. You can find the complete documentation for PyzMail at <https://www.magiksys.net/pyzmail/>.

Install `imapclient` and `pyzmail` from a Terminal window with `pip install --user -U imapclient==2.1.0` and `pip install --user -U pyzmail36==1.0.4` on Windows (or using `pip3`

on macOS and Linux). Appendix A has steps on how to install third-party modules.

## RETRIEVING AND DELETING EMAILS WITH IMAP

Finding and retrieving an email in Python is a multistep process that requires both the `imapclient` and `pyzmail` third-party modules. Just to give you an overview, here's a full example of logging in to an IMAP server, searching for emails, fetching them, and then extracting the text of the email messages from them.

---

```
>>> import imapclient
>>> imapObj = imapclient.IMAPClient('imap.example.com', ssl=True)
>>> imapObj.login('my_email_address@example.com', 'MY_SECRET_PASSWORD')
'my_email_address@example.com Jane Doe authenticated (Success)'
>>> imapObj.select_folder('INBOX', readonly=True)
>>> UIDs = imapObj.search(['SINCE 05-Jul-2019'])
>>> UIDs
[40032, 40033, 40034, 40035, 40036, 40037, 40038, 40039, 40040, 40041]
>>> rawMessages = imapObj.fetch([40041], ['BODY[]', 'FLAGS'])
>>> import pyzmail
>>> message = pyzmail.PyzMessage.factory(rawMessages[40041][b'BODY[]'])
>>> message.get_subject()
'Hello!'
>>> message.get_addresses('from')
[('Edward Snowden', 'esnowden@nsa.gov')]
>>> message.get_addresses('to')
[('Jane Doe', 'jdoe@example.com')]
>>> message.get_addresses('cc')
[]
>>> message.get_addresses('bcc')
[]
>>> message.text_part != None
True
>>> message.text_part.get_payload().decode(message.text_part.charset)
'Follow the money.\r\n\r\n-Ed\r\n'
>>> message.html_part != None
True
>>> message.html_part.get_payload().decode(message.html_part.charset)
```

```
'<div dir="ltr"><div>So long, and thanks for all the fish!<br><br></div>-
```

```
Al<br></div>\r\n'
```

```
>>> imapObj.logout()
```

---

You don't have to memorize these steps. After we go through each step in detail, you can come back to this overview to refresh your memory.

## ***Connecting to an IMAP Server***

Just like you needed an SMTP object to connect to an SMTP server and send email, you need an IMAPClient object to connect to an IMAP server and receive email. First you'll need the domain name of your email provider's IMAP server. This will be different from the SMTP server's domain name. Table 18-2 lists the IMAP servers for several popular email providers.

**Table 18-2:** Email Providers and Their IMAP Servers

<b>Provider</b>	<b>IMAP server domain name</b>
Gmail*	<i>imap.gmail.com</i>
Outlook.com/Hotmail.com*	<i>imap-mail.outlook.com</i>
Yahoo Mail*	<i>imap.mail.yahoo.com</i>
AT&T	<i>imap.mail.att.net</i>
Comcast	<i>imap.comcast.net</i>
Verizon	<i>incoming.verizon.net</i>

\*Additional security measures prevent Python from being able to log in to these servers with the `imapclient` module.

Once you have the domain name of the IMAP server, call the `imapclient.IMAPClient()` function to create an `IMAPClient` object. Most email providers require SSL encryption, so pass the `ssl=True` keyword argument. Enter the following into the interactive shell (using your provider's domain name):

---

```
>>> import imapclient
```

```
>>> imapObj = imapclient.IMAPClient('imap.example.com', ssl=True)
```

---

In all of the interactive shell examples in the following sections, the `imapObj` variable contains an `IMAPClient` object returned from the `imapclient.IMAPClient()` function. In this context, a *client* is the object that connects to the server.

## ***Logging In to the IMAP Server***

Once you have an `IMAPClient` object, call its `login()` method, passing in the username (this is usually your email address) and password as strings.

---

```
>>> imapObj.login('my_email_address@example.com', 'MY_SECRET_PASSWORD')
'my_email_address@example.com Jane Doe authenticated (Success)'
```

---

### **WARNING**

*Remember to never write a password directly into your code! Instead, design your program to accept the password returned from `input()`.*

If the IMAP server rejects this username/password combination, Python raises an `imaplib.error` exception.

## ***Searching for Email***

Once you're logged on, actually retrieving an email that you're interested in is a two-step process. First, you must select a folder you want to search through. Then, you must call the `IMAPClient` object's `search()` method, passing in a string of IMAP search keywords.

## **Selecting a Folder**

Almost every account has an `INBOX` folder by default, but you can also get a list of folders by calling the `IMAPClient` object's `list_folders()` method. This returns a list of tuples. Each tuple contains information about a single folder. Continue the interactive shell example by entering the following:

---

```
>>> import pprint
>>> pprint.pprint(imapObj.list_folders())
[(('\HasNoChildren',), '/', 'Drafts'),
 ('\HasNoChildren',), '/', 'Filler'),
 ('\HasNoChildren',), '/', 'INBOX'),
 ('\HasNoChildren',), '/', 'Sent'),
```

```
--snip--
(('\\HasNoChildren', '\\Flagged'), '/', 'Starred'),
(('\\HasNoChildren', '\\Trash'), '/', 'Trash')]
```

---

The three values in each of the tuples—for example, `(('\\HasNoChildren',), '/', 'INBOX')`—are as follows:

- A tuple of the folder’s flags. (Exactly what these flags represent is beyond the scope of this book, and you can safely ignore this field.)
- The delimiter used in the name string to separate parent folders and subfolders.
- The full name of the folder.

To select a folder to search through, pass the folder’s name as a string into the `IMAPClient` object’s `select_folder()` method.

---

```
>>> imapObj.select_folder('INBOX', readonly=True)
```

---

You can ignore `select_folder()`’s return value. If the selected folder does not exist, Python raises an `imaplib.error` exception.

The `readonly=True` keyword argument prevents you from accidentally making changes or deletions to any of the emails in this folder during the subsequent method calls. Unless you *want* to delete emails, it’s a good idea to always set `readonly` to `True`.

## Performing the Search

With a folder selected, you can now search for emails with the `IMAPClient` object’s `search()` method. The argument to `search()` is a list of strings, each formatted to the IMAP’s search keys. Table 18-3 describes the various search keys.

Note that some IMAP servers may have slightly different implementations for how they handle their flags and search keys. It may require some experimentation in the interactive shell to see exactly how they behave.

You can pass multiple IMAP search key strings in the list argument to the `search()` method. The messages returned are the ones that match *all* the search keys. If you want to match *any* of the search keys, use the `OR` search key. For the `NOT` and `OR` search keys, one and two complete search keys follow the `NOT` and `OR`, respectively.

**Table 18-3:** IMAP Search Keys



Search key	Meaning
'ALL'	Returns all messages in the folder. You may run into <code>imaplib</code> size limits if you request all the messages in a large folder. See “Size Limits” on page 429.
'BEFORE <i>date</i> ', 'ON <i>date</i> ', 'SINCE <i>date</i> '	<p>These three search keys return, respectively, messages that were received by the IMAP server before, on, or after the given <i>date</i>. The date must be formatted like 05-Jul-2019. Also, while 'SINCE 05-Jul-2019' will match messages on and after July 5, 'BEFORE 05-Jul-2019' will match only messages before July 5 but not on July 5 itself.</p>
'SUBJECT <i>string</i> ', 'BODY <i>string</i> ', 'TEXT <i>string</i> '	Returns messages where <i>string</i> is found in the subject, body, or either, respectively. If <i>string</i> has spaces in it, then enclose it with double quotes: 'TEXT "search with spaces" '.
'FROM <i>string</i> ', 'TO <i>string</i> ', 'CC <i>string</i> ', 'BCC <i>string</i> '	<p>Returns all messages where <i>string</i> is found in the “from” email address, “to” addresses, “cc” (carbon copy) addresses, or “bcc” (blind carbon copy) addresses, respectively. If there are multiple email addresses in <i>string</i>, then separate them with spaces and enclose them all with double quotes: 'cc "firstcc@example.com secondcc@example.com" '.</p>
'SEEN', 'UNSEEN'	Returns all messages with and without the \Seen flag, respectively. An email obtains the \Seen flag if it has been accessed with a <code>fetch()</code> method call (described later) or if it is clicked when you’re checking your email in an email program or web browser. It’s more common to say the email has been “read” rather than “seen,” but they mean the same thing.

Search key	Meaning
'ANSWERED', 'UNANSWERED'	Returns all messages with and without the <i>\Answered</i> flag, respectively. A message obtains the <i>\Answered</i> flag when it is replied to.
'DELETED', 'UNDELETED'	Returns all messages with and without the <i>\Deleted</i> flag, respectively. Email messages deleted with the <code>delete_messages()</code> method are given the <i>\Deleted</i> flag but are not permanently deleted until the <code>expunge()</code> method is called (see “Deleting Emails” on page 432). Note that some email providers automatically expunge emails.
'DRAFT', 'UNDRAFT'	Returns all messages with and without the <i>\Draft</i> flag, respectively. Draft messages are usually kept in a separate <code>Drafts</code> folder rather than in the <code>INBOX</code> folder.
'FLAGGED', 'UNFLAGGED'	Returns all messages with and without the <i>\Flagged</i> flag, respectively. This flag is usually used to mark email messages as “Important” or “Urgent.”
'LARGER <i>N</i> ', 'SMALLER <i>N</i> '	Returns all messages larger or smaller than <i>N</i> bytes, respectively.
'NOT <i>search-key</i> '	Returns the messages that <i>search-key</i> would <i>not</i> have returned.
'OR <i>search-key1 search-key2</i> '	Returns the messages that match <i>either</i> the first or second <i>search-key</i> .

Here are some example `search()` method calls along with their meanings:

`imapObj.search(['ALL'])` Returns every message in the currently selected folder.

`imapObj.search(['ON 05-Jul-2019'])` Returns every message sent on July 5, 2019.

`imapObj.search(['SINCE 01-Jan-2019', 'BEFORE 01-Feb-2019', 'UNSEEN'])` Returns every message sent in January 2019 that is unread. (Note that this means *on and after*

January 1 and *up to but not including* February 1.)

`imapObj.search(['SINCE 01-Jan-2019', 'FROM alice@example.com'])` Returns every message from *alice@example.com* sent since the start of 2019.

`imapObj.search(['SINCE 01-Jan-2019', 'NOT FROM alice@example.com'])` Returns every message sent from everyone except *alice@example.com* since the start of 2019.

`imapObj.search(['OR FROM alice@example.com FROM bob@example.com'])` Returns every message ever sent from *alice@example.com* or *bob@example.com*.

`imapObj.search(['FROM alice@example.com', 'FROM bob@example.com'])` Trick example! This search never returns any messages, because messages must match *all* search keywords. Since there can be only one “from” address, it is impossible for a message to be from both *alice@example.com* and *bob@example.com*.

The `search()` method doesn’t return the emails themselves but rather unique IDs (UIDs) for the emails, as integer values. You can then pass these UIDs to the `fetch()` method to obtain the email content.

Continue the interactive shell example by entering the following:

---

```
>>> UIDs = imapObj.search(['SINCE 05-Jul-2019'])
>>> UIDs
[40032, 40033, 40034, 40035, 40036, 40037, 40038, 40039, 40040, 40041]
```

---

Here, the list of message IDs (for messages received July 5 onward) returned by `search()` is stored in `UIDs`. The list of UIDs returned on your computer will be different from the ones shown here; they are unique to a particular email account. When you later pass UIDs to other function calls, use the UID values you received, not the ones printed in this book’s examples.

## Size Limits

If your search matches a large number of email messages, Python might raise an exception that says `imaplib.error: got more than 10000 bytes`. When this happens, you will have to disconnect and reconnect to the IMAP server and try again.

This limit is in place to prevent your Python programs from eating up too much memory. Unfortunately, the default size limit is often too small. You can change this limit from 10,000 bytes to 10,000,000 bytes by running this code:

```
>>> import imaplib
>>> imaplib._MAXLINE = 10000000
```

---

This should prevent this error message from coming up again. You may want to make these two lines part of every IMAP program you write.

## ***Fetching an Email and Marking It as Read***

Once you have a list of UIDs, you can call the `IMAPClient` object's `fetch()` method to get the actual email content.

The list of UIDs will be `fetch()`'s first argument. The second argument should be the list `['BODY[]']`, which tells `fetch()` to download all the body content for the emails specified in your UID list.

Let's continue our interactive shell example.

---

```
>>> rawMessages = imapObj.fetch(UIDs, ['BODY[]'])
>>> import pprint
>>> pprint.pprint(rawMessages)
{40040: {'BODY[]': 'Delivered-To: my_email_address@example.com\r\n'
                'Received: by 10.76.71.167 with SMTP id '
--snip--
                '\r\n'
                '-----=_Part_6000970_707736290.1404819487066---\r\n',
        'SEQ': 5430}}
```

---

Import `pprint` and pass the return value from `fetch()`, stored in the variable `rawMessages`, to `pprint.pprint()` to “pretty print” it, and you’ll see that this return value is a nested dictionary of messages with UIDs as the keys. Each message is stored as a dictionary with two keys: `'BODY[]'` and `'SEQ'`. The `'BODY[]'` key maps to the actual body of the email. The `'SEQ'` key is for a *sequence number*, which has a similar role to the UID. You can safely ignore it.

As you can see, the message content in the `'BODY[]'` key is pretty unintelligible. It's in a format called RFC 822, which is designed for IMAP servers to read. But you don't need to understand the RFC 822 format; later in this chapter, the `pyzmail` module will make sense of it for you.

When you selected a folder to search through, you called `select_folder()` with the `readonly=True` keyword argument. Doing this prevents you from accidentally deleting an

email—but it also means that emails will not get marked as read if you fetch them with the `fetch()` method. If you *do* want emails to be marked as read when you fetch them, you’ll need to pass `readonly=False` to `select_folder()`. If the selected folder is already in read-only mode, you can reselect the current folder with another call to `select_folder()`, this time with the `readonly=False` keyword argument:

---

```
>>> imapObj.select_folder('INBOX', readonly=False)
```

---

## ***Getting Email Addresses from a Raw Message***

The raw messages returned from the `fetch()` method still aren’t very useful to people who just want to read their email. The `pyzmail` module parses these raw messages and returns them as `PyzMessage` objects, which make the subject, body, “To” field, “From” field, and other sections of the email easily accessible to your Python code.

Continue the interactive shell example with the following (using UIDs from your own email account, not the ones shown here):

---

```
>>> import pyzmail
>>> message = pyzmail.PyzMessage.factory(rawMessages[40041][b'BODY[]'])
```

---

First, import `pyzmail`. Then, to create a `PyzMessage` object of an email, call the `pyzmail.PyzMessage.factory()` function and pass it the `'BODY[]'` section of the raw message. (Note that the `b` prefix means this is a bytes value, not a string value. The difference isn’t too important; just remember to include the `b` prefix in your code.) Store the result in `message`. Now `message` contains a `PyzMessage` object, which has several methods that make it easy to get the email’s subject line, as well as all sender and recipient addresses. The `get_subject()` method returns the subject as a simple string value. The `get_addresses()` method returns a list of addresses for the field you pass it. For example, the method calls might look like this:

---

```
>>> message.get_subject()
'Hello!'

>>> message.get_addresses('from')
[('Edward Snowden', 'esnowden@nsa.gov')]

>>> message.get_addresses('to')
[('Jane Doe', 'my_email_address@example.com')]

>>> message.get_addresses('cc')
```

```
[]  
>>> message.get_addresses('bcc')  
[]
```

---

Notice that the argument for `get_addresses()` is 'from', 'to', 'cc', or 'bcc'. The return value of `get_addresses()` is a list of tuples. Each tuple contains two strings: the first is the name associated with the email address, and the second is the email address itself. If there are no addresses in the requested field, `get_addresses()` returns a blank list. Here, the 'cc' carbon copy and 'bcc' blind carbon copy fields both contained no addresses and so returned empty lists.

## ***Getting the Body from a Raw Message***

Emails can be sent as plaintext, HTML, or both. Plaintext emails contain only text, while HTML emails can have colors, fonts, images, and other features that make the email message look like a small web page. If an email is only plaintext, its `PyzMessage` object will have its `html_part` attributes set to `None`. Likewise, if an email is only HTML, its `PyzMessage` object will have its `text_part` attribute set to `None`.

Otherwise, the `text_part` or `html_part` value will have a `get_payload()` method that returns the email's body as a value of the *bytes* data type. (The bytes data type is beyond the scope of this book.) But this *still* isn't a string value that we can use. Ugh! The last step is to call the `decode()` method on the bytes value returned by `get_payload()`. The `decode()` method takes one argument: the message's character encoding, stored in the `text_part.charset` or `html_part.charset` attribute. This, finally, will return the string of the email's body.

Continue the interactive shell example by entering the following:

---

```
❶ >>> message.text_part != None  
True  
  
>>> message.text_part.get_payload().decode(message.text_part.charset)  
❷ 'So long, and thanks for all the fish!\r\n\r\n-Al\r\n'  
❸ >>> message.html_part != None  
True  
❹ >>> message.html_part.get_payload().decode(message.html_part.charset)  
'<div dir="ltr"><div>So long, and thanks for all the fish!<br><br></div>-Al  
<br></div>\r\n'
```

---

The email we're working with has both plaintext and HTML content, so the `PyzMessage` object stored in `message` has `text_part` and `html_part` attributes not equal to `None`

- 1
- 2
3. Calling `get_payload()` on the message's `text_part` and then calling `decode()` on the bytes value returns a string of the text version of the email
4. Using `get_payload()` and `decode()` with the message's `html_part` returns a string of the HTML version of the email

## Deleting Emails

To delete emails, pass a list of message UIDs to the `IMAPClient` object's `delete_messages()` method. This marks the emails with the `\Deleted` flag. Calling the `expunge()` method permanently deletes all emails with the `\Deleted` flag in the currently selected folder. Consider the following interactive shell example:

---

```
❶ >>> imapObj.select_folder('INBOX', readonly=False)
❷ >>> UIDs = imapObj.search(['ON 09-Jul-2019'])
>>> UIDs
[40066]
>>> imapObj.delete_messages(UIDs)
❸ {40066: ('\Seen', '\Deleted')}
>>> imapObj.expunge()
('Success', [(5452, 'EXISTS')])
```

---

Here we select the inbox by calling `select_folder()` on the `IMAPClient` object and passing `'INBOX'` as the first argument; we also pass the keyword argument `readonly=False` so that we can delete emails ❶. We search the inbox for messages received on a specific date and store the returned message IDs in `UIDs` ❷. Calling `delete_message()` and passing it `UIDs` returns a dictionary; each key-value pair is a message ID and a tuple of the message's flags, which should now include `\Deleted` ❸. Calling `expunge()` then permanently deletes messages with the `\Deleted` flag and returns a success message if there were no problems expunging the emails. Note that some email providers automatically expunge emails deleted with `delete_messages()` instead of waiting for an expunge command from the IMAP client.

## Disconnecting from the IMAP Server

When your program has finished retrieving or deleting emails, simply call the `IMAPClient`'s `logout()` method to disconnect from the IMAP server.

```
>>> imapObj.logout()
```

---

If your program runs for several minutes or more, the IMAP server may *time out*, or automatically disconnect. In this case, the next method call your program makes on the `IMAPClient` object should raise an exception like the following:

---

```
imaplib.abort: socket error: [WinError 10054] An existing connection was  
forcibly closed by the remote host
```

---

In this event, your program will have to call `imapclient.IMAPClient()` to connect again.

Whew! That’s it. There were a lot of hoops to jump through, but you now have a way to get your Python programs to log in to an email account and fetch emails. You can always consult the overview in “Retrieving and Deleting Emails with IMAP” on page 424 whenever you need to remember all of the steps.

## PROJECT: SENDING MEMBER DUES REMINDER EMAILS

Say you have been “volunteered” to track member dues for the Mandatory Volunteerism Club. This is a truly boring job, involving maintaining a spreadsheet of everyone who has paid each month and emailing reminders to those who haven’t. Instead of going through the spreadsheet yourself and copying and pasting the same email to everyone who is behind on dues, let’s—you guessed it—write a script that does this for you.

At a high level, here’s what your program will do:

1. Read data from an Excel spreadsheet.
2. Find all members who have not paid dues for the latest month.
3. Find their email addresses and send them personalized reminders.

This means your code will need to do the following:

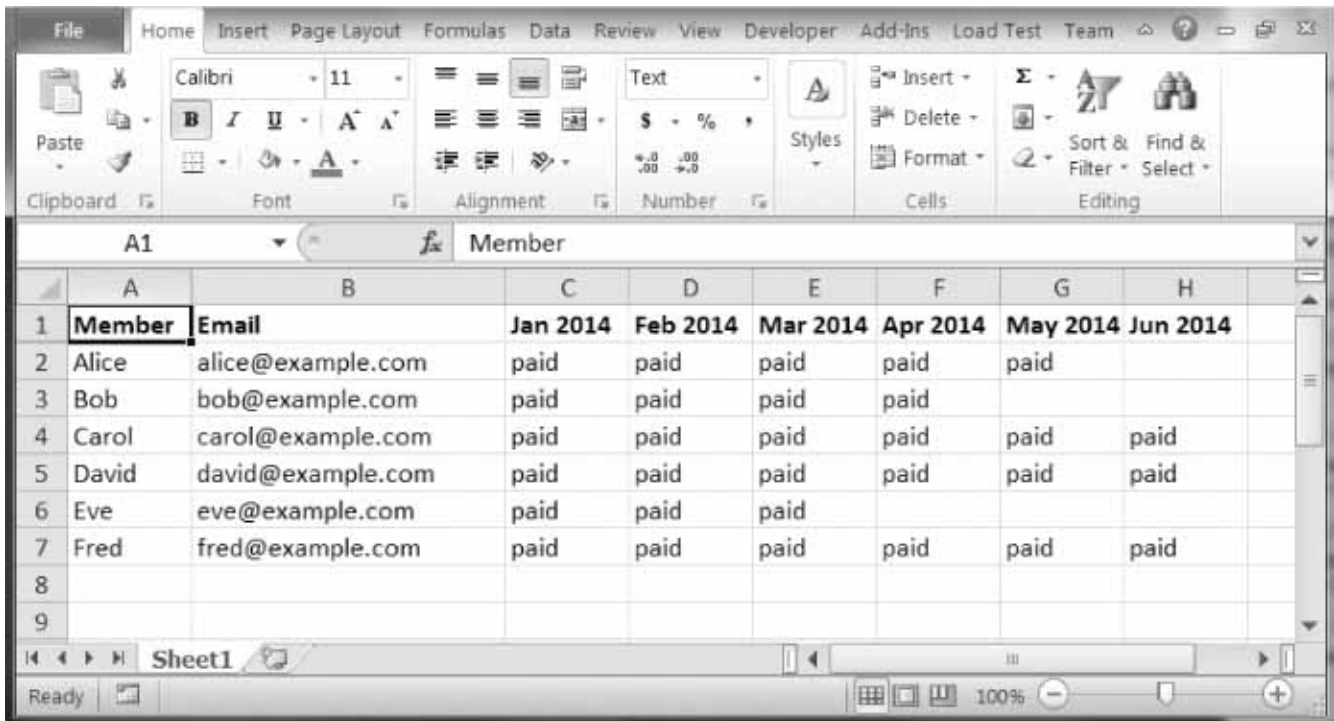
1. Open and read the cells of an Excel document with the `openpyxl` module. (See Chapter 13 for working with Excel files.)
2. Create a dictionary of members who are behind on their dues.
3. Log in to an SMTP server by calling `smtplib.SMTP()`, `ehlo()`, `starttls()`, and `login()`.
4. For all members behind on their dues, send a personalized reminder email by calling the `sendmail()` method.

Open a new file editor tab and save it as *sendDuesReminders.py*.



## Step 1: Open the Excel File

Let's say the Excel spreadsheet you use to track membership dues payments looks like Figure 18-2 and is in a file named *duesRecords.xlsx*. You can download this file from <https://nostarch.com/automatestuff2/>.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Member	Email	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	Jun 2014
2	Alice	alice@example.com	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid	
3	Bob	bob@example.com	paid	paid	paid	paid		
4	Carol	carol@example.com	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid
5	David	david@example.com	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid
6	Eve	eve@example.com	paid	paid	paid			
7	Fred	fred@example.com	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid	paid
8								
9								

Figure 18-2: The spreadsheet for tracking member dues payments

This spreadsheet has every member's name and email address. Each month has a column tracking members' payment statuses. The cell for each member is marked with the text *paid* once they have paid their dues.

The program will have to open *duesRecords.xlsx* and figure out the column for the latest month by reading the `sheet.max_column` attribute. (You can consult Chapter 13 for more information on accessing cells in Excel spreadsheet files with the `openpyxl` module.) Enter the following code into the file editor tab:

```
#!/ python3

# sendDuesReminders.py - Sends emails based on payment status in spreadsheet.

import openpyxl, smtplib, sys

# Open the spreadsheet and get the latest dues status.
```

```
❶ wb = openpyxl.load_workbook('duesRecords.xlsx')
```

```
❷ sheet = wb.get_sheet_by_name('Sheet1')
```

```

❸ lastCol = sheet.max_column
❹ latestMonth = sheet.cell(row=1, column=lastCol).value

# TODO: Check each member's payment status.

# TODO: Log in to email account.

# TODO: Send out reminder emails.

```

---

After importing the `openpyxl`, `smtp`lib, and `sys` modules, we open our *duesRecords.xlsx* file and store the resulting `Workbook` object in `wb` ❶. Then we get Sheet 1 and store the resulting `Worksheet` object in `sheet` ❷. Now that we have a `Worksheet` object, we can access rows, columns, and cells. We store the highest column in `lastCol` ❸, and we then use row number 1 and `lastCol` to access the cell that should hold the most recent month. We get the value in this cell and store it in `latestMonth` ❹.

## Step 2: Find All Unpaid Members

Once you've determined the column number of the latest month (stored in `lastCol`), you can loop through all rows after the first row (which has the column headers) to see which members have the text *paid* in the cell for that month's dues. If the member hasn't paid, you can grab the member's name and email address from columns 1 and 2, respectively. This information will go into the `unpaidMembers` dictionary, which will track all members who haven't paid in the most recent month. Add the following code to *sendDuesReminder.py*.

---

```

#! python3
# sendDuesReminders.py - Sends emails based on payment status in spreadsheet.

--snip--

# Check each member's payment status.
unpaidMembers = {}
❶ for r in range(2, sheet.max_row + 1):
    ❷ payment = sheet.cell(row=r, column=lastCol).value
    if payment != 'paid':
        ❸ name = sheet.cell(row=r, column=1).value

```

④ `email = sheet.cell(row=r, column=2).value`

⑤ `unpaidMembers[name] = email`

---

This code sets up an empty dictionary `unpaidMembers` and then loops through all the rows after the first ❶. For each row, the value in the most recent column is stored in `payment` ❷. If `payment` is not equal to 'paid', then the value of the first column is stored in `name` ❸, the value of the second column is stored in `email` ❹, and `name` and `email` are added to `unpaidMembers` ❺.

### ***Step 3: Send Customized Email Reminders***

Once you have a list of all unpaid members, it's time to send them email reminders. Add the following code to your program, except with your real email address and provider information:

---

```
#!/ python3
# sendDuesReminders.py - Sends emails based on payment status in spreadsheet.

-- snip --

# Log in to email account.
smtpObj = smtplib.SMTP('smtp.example.com', 587)
smtpObj.ehlo()
smtpObj.starttls()
smtpObj.login('my_email_address@example.com', sys.argv[1])
```

---

Create an SMTP object by calling `smtplib.SMTP()` and passing it the domain name and port for your provider. Call `ehlo()` and `starttls()`, and then call `login()` and pass it your email address and `sys.argv[1]`, which will store your password string. You'll enter the password as a command line argument each time you run the program, to avoid saving your password in your source code.

Once your program has logged in to your email account, it should go through the `unpaidMembers` dictionary and send a personalized email to each member's email address. Add the following to *sendDuesReminders.py*:

---

```
#!/ python3
# sendDuesReminders.py - Sends emails based on payment status in spreadsheet.
```

--snip--

```
# Send out reminder emails.
for name, email in unpaidMembers.items():
    ❶ body = "Subject: %s dues unpaid.\nDear %s,\nRecords show that you have not
paid dues for %s. Please make this payment as soon as possible. Thank you!" %
(latestMonth, name, latestMonth)
    ❷ print('Sending email to %s...' % email)
    ❸ sendmailStatus = smtpObj.sendmail('my_email_address@example.com', email,
body)

    ❹ if sendmailStatus != {}:
        print('There was a problem sending email to %s: %s' % (email,
sendmailStatus))
smtpObj.quit()
```

---

This code loops through the names and emails in `unpaidMembers`. For each member who hasn't paid, we customize a message with the latest month and the member's name, and store the message in `body` ❶. We print output saying that we're sending an email to this member's email address ❷. Then we call `sendmail()`, passing it the from address and the customized message ❸. We store the return value in `sendmailStatus`.

Remember that the `sendmail()` method will return a nonempty dictionary value if the SMTP server reported an error sending that particular email. The last part of the `for` loop at ❹ checks if the returned dictionary is nonempty and, if it is, prints the recipient's email address and the returned dictionary.

After the program is done sending all the emails, the `quit()` method is called to disconnect from the SMTP server.

When you run the program, the output will look something like this:

---

```
Sending email to alice@example.com...
Sending email to bob@example.com...
Sending email to eve@example.com...
```

---

The recipients will receive an email about their missed payments that looks just like an email you would have sent manually.

## SENDING TEXT MESSAGES WITH SMS EMAIL GATEWAYS

People are more likely to be near their smartphones than their computers, so text messages are often a more immediate and reliable way of sending notifications than email. Also, text messages are usually shorter, making it more likely that a person will get around to reading them.

The easiest, though not most reliable, way to send text messages is by using an SMS (short message service) email gateway, an email server that a cell phone provider set up to receive text via email and then forward to the recipient as a text message.

You can write a program to send these emails using the `ezgmail` or `smtplib` modules. The phone number and phone company's email server make up the recipient email address. The subject and body of the email will be the body of the text message. For example, to send a text to the phone number 415-555-1234, which is owned by a Verizon customer, you would send an email to `4155551234@vtext.com`.

You can find the SMS email gateway for a cell phone provider by doing a web search for “sms email gateway *provider name*,” but Table 18-4 lists the gateways for several popular providers. Many providers have separate email servers for SMS, which limits messages to 160 characters, and MMS (multimedia messaging service), which has no character limit. If you wanted to send a photo, you would have to use the MMS gateway and attach the file to the email.

If you don't know the recipient's cell phone provider, you can try using a *carrier lookup* site, which should provide a phone number's carrier. The best way to find these sites is by searching the web for “find cell phone provider for number.” Many of these sites will let you look up numbers for free (though will charge you if you need to look up hundreds or thousands of phone numbers through their API).

**Table 18-4:** SMS Email Gateways for Cell Phone Providers

Cell phone provider	SMS gateway	MMS gateway
AT&T	<i>number@txt.att.net</i>	<i>number@mms.att.net</i>
Boost Mobile	<i>number@sms.myboostmobile.com</i>	Same as SMS
Cricket	<i>number@sms.cricketwireless.net</i>	<i>number@mms.cricketwireless.net</i>
Google Fi	<i>number@msg.fi.google.com</i>	Same as SMS
Metro PCS	<i>number@mymetropcs.com</i>	Same as SMS

Cell phone provider	SMS gateway	MMS gateway
Republic Wireless	<i>number@text.republicwireless.com</i>	Same as SMS
Sprint	<i>number@messaging.sprintpcs.com</i>	<i>number@pm.sprint.com</i>
T-Mobile	<i>number@tmomail.net</i>	Same as SMS
U.S. Cellular	<i>number@email.uscc.net</i>	<i>number@mms.uscc.net</i>
Verizon	<i>number@vtext.com</i>	<i>number@vzwpx.com</i>
Virgin Mobile	<i>number@vmobl.com</i>	<i>number@vmpix.com</i>
XFINITY Mobile	<i>number@vtext.com</i>	<i>number@mypixmessages.com</i>

While SMS email gateways are free and simple to use, there are several major disadvantages to them:

- You have no guarantee that the text will arrive promptly, or at all.
- You have no way of knowing if the text failed to arrive.
- The text recipient has no way of replying.
- SMS gateways may block you if you send too many emails, and there's no way to find out how many is "too many."
- Just because the SMS gateway delivers a text message today doesn't mean it will work tomorrow.

Sending texts via an SMS gateway is ideal when you need to send the occasional, nonurgent message. If you need more reliable service, use a non-email SMS gateway service, as described next.

## SENDING TEXT MESSAGES WITH TWILIO

In this section, you'll learn how to sign up for the free Twilio service and use its Python module to send text messages. Twilio is an *SMS gateway service*, which means it allows you to send text messages from your programs via the internet. Although the free trial account comes with a limited amount of credit and the texts will be prefixed with the words *Sent from a Twilio trial account*, this trial service is probably adequate for your personal programs.

But Twilio isn't the only SMS gateway service. If you prefer not to use Twilio, you can find alternative services by searching online for "free sms" "gateway," "python sms api," or even "twilio alternatives."

Before signing up for a Twilio account, install the `twilio` module with `pip install --user --upgrade twilio` on Windows (or use `pip3` on macOS and Linux). Appendix A has more details about installing third-party modules.

## NOTE

*This section is specific to the United States. Twilio does offer SMS texting services for countries other than the United States; see <https://twilio.com/> for more information. The `twilio` module and its functions will work the same outside the United States.*

## ***Signing Up for a Twilio Account***

Go to <https://twilio.com/> and fill out the sign-up form. Once you've signed up for a new account, you'll need to verify a mobile phone number that you want to send texts to. Go to the Verified Caller IDs page and add a phone number you have access to. Twilio will text a code to this number that you must enter to verify the number. (This verification is necessary to prevent people from using the service to spam random phone numbers with text messages.) You will now be able to send texts to this phone number using the `twilio` module.

Twilio provides your trial account with a phone number to use as the sender of text messages. You will need two more pieces of information: your account SID and the auth (authentication) token. You can find this information on the Dashboard page when you are logged in to your Twilio account. These values act as your Twilio username and password when logging in from a Python program.

## ***Sending Text Messages***

Once you've installed the `twilio` module, signed up for a Twilio account, verified your phone number, registered a Twilio phone number, and obtained your account SID and auth token, you will finally be ready to send yourself text messages from your Python scripts.

Compared to all the registration steps, the actual Python code is fairly simple. With your computer connected to the internet, enter the following into the interactive shell,

replacing the accountSID, authToken, myTwilioNumber, and myCellPhone variable values with your real information:

---

```
❶ >>> from twilio.rest import Client

>>> accountSID = 'ACxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx'
>>> authToken = 'xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx'

❷ >>> twilioCli = Client(accountSID, authToken)

>>> myTwilioNumber = '+14955551234'
>>> myCellPhone = '+14955558888'

❸ >>> message = twilioCli.messages.create(body='Mr. Watson - Come here - I want
to see you.', from_=myTwilioNumber, to=myCellPhone)
```

---

A few moments after typing the last line, you should receive a text message that reads, *Sent from your Twilio trial account - Mr. Watson - Come here - I want to see you.*

Because of the way the twilio module is set up, you need to import it using `from twilio.rest import Client`, not just `import twilio` ❶. Store your account SID in `accountSID` and your auth token in `authToken` and then call `Client()` and pass it `accountSID` and `authToken`. The call to `Client()` returns a `Client` object ❷. This object has a `messages` attribute, which in turn has a `create()` method you can use to send text messages. This is the method that will instruct Twilio's servers to send your text message. After storing your Twilio number and cell phone number in `myTwilioNumber` and `myCellPhone`, respectively, call `create()` and pass it keyword arguments specifying the body of the text message, the sender's number (`myTwilioNumber`), and the recipient's number (`myCellPhone`) ❸.

The `Message` object returned from the `create()` method will have information about the text message that was sent. Continue the interactive shell example by entering the following:

---

```
>>> message.to
'+14955558888'
>>> message.from_
'+14955551234'
>>> message.body
'Mr. Watson - Come here - I want to see you.'
```

---



The `to`, `from_`, and `body` attributes should hold your cell phone number, Twilio number, and message, respectively. Note that the sending phone number is in the `from_` attribute—with an underscore at the end—not `from`. This is because `from` is a keyword in Python (you’ve seen it used in the `from modulename import *` form of `import` statement, for example), so it cannot be used as an attribute name. Continue the interactive shell example with the following:

---

```
>>> message.status
'queued'
>>> message.date_created
datetime.datetime(2019, 7, 8, 1, 36, 18)
>>> message.date_sent == None
True
```

---

The `status` attribute should give you a string. The `date_created` and `date_sent` attributes should give you a `datetime` object if the message has been created and sent. It may seem odd that the `status` attribute is set to `'queued'` and the `date_sent` attribute is set to `None` when you’ve already received the text message. This is because you captured the `Message` object in the `message` variable *before* the text was actually sent. You will need to refetch the `Message` object in order to see its most up-to-date `status` and `date_sent`. Every Twilio message has a unique string ID (SID) that can be used to fetch the latest update of the `Message` object. Continue the interactive shell example by entering the following:

---

```
>>> message.sid
'SM09520de7639ba3af137c6fcb7c5f4b51'
❶ >>> updatedMessage = twilioCli.messages.get(message.sid)
>>> updatedMessage.status
'delivered'
>>> updatedMessage.date_sent
datetime.datetime(2019, 7, 8, 1, 36, 18)
```

---

Entering `message.sid` shows you this message’s long SID. By passing this SID to the Twilio client’s `get()` method ❶, you can retrieve a new `Message` object with the most up-to-date information. In this new `Message` object, the `status` and `date_sent` attributes are correct.

The status attribute will be set to one of the following string values: 'queued', 'sending', 'sent', 'delivered', 'undelivered', or 'failed'. These statuses are self-explanatory, but for more precise details, take a look at the resources at <https://nostarch.com/automatestuff2/>.

## RECEIVING TEXT MESSAGES WITH PYTHON

Unfortunately, receiving text messages with Twilio is a bit more complicated than sending them. Twilio requires that you have a website running its own web application. That's beyond the scope of these pages, but you can find more details in this book's online resources (<https://nostarch.com/automatestuff2/>).

## PROJECT: “JUST TEXT ME” MODULE

The person you'll most often text from your programs is probably you. Texting is a great way to send yourself notifications when you're away from your computer. If you've automated a boring task with a program that takes a couple of hours to run, you could have it notify you with a text when it's finished. Or you may have a regularly scheduled program running that sometimes needs to contact you, such as a weather-checking program that texts you a reminder to pack an umbrella.

As a simple example, here's a small Python program with a `textmyself()` function that sends a message passed to it as a string argument. Open a new file editor tab and enter the following code, replacing the account SID, auth token, and phone numbers with your own information. Save it as *textMyself.py*.

---

```
#!/ python3

# textMyself.py - Defines the textmyself() function that texts a message
# passed to it as a string.

# Preset values:
accountSID = 'ACxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx'
authToken  = 'xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx'
myNumber   = '+15559998888'
twilioNumber = '+15552225678'

from twilio.rest import Client
```

```
❶ def textmyself(message):  
    ❷ twilioCli = Client(accountSID, authToken)  
    ❸ twilioCli.messages.create(body=message, from_=twilioNumber, to=myNumber)
```

---

This program stores an account SID, auth token, sending number, and receiving number. It then defined `textmyself()` to take on argument ❶, make a `Client` object ❷, and call `create()` with the message you passed ❸.

If you want to make the `textmyself()` function available to your other programs, simply place the *textMyself.py* file in the same folder as your Python script. Whenever you want one of your programs to text you, just add the following:

---

```
import textmyself  
textmyself.textmyself('The boring task is finished.')
```

---

You need to sign up for Twilio and write the texting code only once. After that, it's just two lines of code to send a text from any of your other programs.

## SUMMARY

We communicate with each other on the internet and over cell phone networks in dozens of different ways, but email and texting predominate. Your programs can communicate through these channels, which gives them powerful new notification features. You can even write programs running on different computers that communicate with one another directly via email, with one program sending emails with SMTP and the other retrieving them with IMAP.

Python's `smtplib` provides functions for using the SMTP to send emails through your email provider's SMTP server. Likewise, the third-party `imapclient` and `pyzmail` modules let you access IMAP servers and retrieve emails sent to you. Although IMAP is a bit more involved than SMTP, it's also quite powerful and allows you to search for particular emails, download them, and parse them to extract the subject and body as string values.

As a security and spam precaution, some popular email services like Gmail don't allow you to use the standard SMTP and IMAP protocols to access their services. The `EZGmail` module acts as a convenient wrapper for the Gmail API, letting your Python scripts access your Gmail account. I highly recommend that you set up a separate Gmail account for your scripts to use so that potential bugs in your program don't cause problems for your personal Gmail account.

Texting is a bit different from email, since, unlike email, more than just an internet connection is needed to send SMS texts. Fortunately, services such as Twilio provide modules to allow you to send text messages from your programs. Once you go through an initial setup process, you'll be able to send texts with just a couple lines of code.

With these modules in your skill set, you'll be able to program the specific conditions under which your programs should send notifications or reminders. Now your programs will have reach far beyond the computer they're running on!

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. What is the protocol for sending email? For checking and receiving email?
2. What four `smtplib` functions/methods must you call to log in to an SMTP server?
3. What two `imapclient` functions/methods must you call to log in to an IMAP server?
4. What kind of argument do you pass to `imapObj.search()`?
5. What do you do if your code gets an error message that says `got more than 10000 bytes`?
6. The `imapclient` module handles connecting to an IMAP server and finding emails. What is one module that handles reading the emails that `imapclient` collects?
7. When using the Gmail API, what are the *credentials.json* and *token.json* files?
8. In the Gmail API, what's the difference between "thread" and "message" objects?
9. Using `ezgmail.search()`, how can you find emails that have file attachments?
10. What three pieces of information do you need from Twilio before you can send text messages?

## PRACTICE PROJECTS

For practice, write programs that do the following.

### ***Random Chore Assignment Emailer***

Write a program that takes a list of people's email addresses and a list of chores that need to be done and randomly assigns chores to people. Email each person their assigned chores. If you're feeling ambitious, keep a record of each person's previously assigned chores so that you can make sure the program avoids assigning anyone the same chore

they did last time. For another possible feature, schedule the program to run once a week automatically.

Here's a hint: if you pass a list to the `random.choice()` function, it will return a randomly selected item from the list. Part of your code could look like this:

---

```
chores = ['dishes', 'bathroom', 'vacuum', 'walk dog']
randomChore = random.choice(chores)
chores.remove(randomChore)    # this chore is now taken, so remove it
```

---

## ***Umbrella Reminder***

Chapter 12 showed you how to use the `requests` module to scrape data from <https://weather.gov/>. Write a program that runs just before you wake up in the morning and checks whether it's raining that day. If so, have the program text you a reminder to pack an umbrella before leaving the house.

## ***Auto Unsubscriber***

Write a program that scans through your email account, finds all the unsubscribe links in all your emails, and automatically opens them in a browser. This program will have to log in to your email provider's IMAP server and download all of your emails. You can use Beautiful Soup (covered in Chapter 12) to check for any instance where the word *unsubscribe* occurs within an HTML link tag.

Once you have a list of these URLs, you can use `webbrowser.open()` to automatically open all of these links in a browser.

You'll still have to manually go through and complete any additional steps to unsubscribe yourself from these lists. In most cases, this involves clicking a link to confirm.

But this script saves you from having to go through all of your emails looking for unsubscribe links. You can then pass this script along to your friends so they can run it on their email accounts. (Just make sure your email password isn't hardcoded in the source code!)

## ***Controlling Your Computer Through Email***

Write a program that checks an email account every 15 minutes for any instructions you email it and executes those instructions automatically. For example, BitTorrent is a peer-to-peer downloading system. Using free BitTorrent software such as qBittorrent, you can

download large media files on your home computer. If you email the program a (completely legal, not at all piratical) BitTorrent link, the program will eventually check its email, find this message, extract the link, and then launch qBittorrent to start downloading the file. This way, you can have your home computer begin downloads while you're away, and the (completely legal, not at all piratical) download can be finished by the time you return home.

Chapter 17 covers how to launch programs on your computer using the `subprocess.Popen()` function. For example, the following call would launch the qBittorrent program, along with a torrent file:

---

```
qbProcess = subprocess.Popen(['C:\\\\Program Files (x86)\\qBittorrent\\  
qbittorrent.exe', 'shakespeare_complete_works.torrent'])
```

---

Of course, you'll want the program to make sure the emails come from you. In particular, you might want to require that the emails contain a password, since it is fairly trivial for hackers to fake a "from" address in emails. The program should delete the emails it finds so that it doesn't repeat instructions every time it checks the email account. As an extra feature, have the program email or text you a confirmation every time it executes a command. Since you won't be sitting in front of the computer that is running the program, it's a good idea to use the logging functions (see Chapter 11) to write a text file log that you can check if errors come up.

qBittorrent (as well as other BitTorrent applications) has a feature where it can quit automatically after the download completes. Chapter 17 explains how you can determine when a launched application has quit with the `wait()` method for `Popen` objects. The `wait()` method call will block until qBittorrent has stopped, and then your program can email or text you a notification that the download has completed.

There are a lot of possible features you could add to this project. If you get stuck, you can download an example implementation of this program from <https://nostarch.com/automatestuff2/>.



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