



B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

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This week...

Tips for Managing Your Inbox

'Seasoned' Principals and Vice-Principals may remember a simpler time when emails were not demanding a large percentage of your day. Where phone calls and conversations were still the norm, versus the never-ending messages in your inbox that come from many different sources!

Nowadays, wouldn't you agree that the email load is intense? This often-overused communication tool takes significant time to sort through, prioritize, and thoughtfully respond, while the sending party believes that through sending the email, *you* as the recipient are now accountable for the content forwarded.

I am AWFUL at managing my inbox, as it fills and fills. I am generally good at responding to my emails, and do not get too far behind, but I am loathe to delete anything. I have a somewhat 'limited' number of folks who would send me emails; it is hard for me to imagine

the exposure you have to all those emails from a multitude of sources – including parents! How do you manage it all?

Well, if you are anything like me, this is the ReFresh article for you!

There were many articles and ideas I found while researching this topic. I decided to provide tips from this source: [The Muse: 10 Ways to Manage Your Email Inbox \(According to People Who Get 100+ Emails a Day\)](#), as well as a video with step-by-step instructions on how to program your Outlook account to incorporate many of the tips shared below.

10 Tips to Managing your Inbox

1. Only Keep Emails Requiring Immediate Action in Your Inbox

Be ruthless about which messages take up real estate in your inbox. When you open your inbox, immediately see what is most urgent and requiring a response. This way you will take action on items in an extremely timely manner.

2. Create a ‘Waiting Folder’ for Action-Pending Emails

So where do emails go if not your inbox? Create a ‘waiting folder’ for emails that require action from someone else before you can respond. This is a great place to look each day or week to remind you of what projects are still pending.

3. Use Subfolders or Labels

Create an easy-to-decode subfolder or label system. Use this to group together important email chains, which makes it easier to find them at a future date. Labels can include topics, support for decisions to be made, and reference materials for future needs.

4. Set Inbox Rules or Filters

Many email providers allow you to set up inbox rules or filters that will take action on your behalf and help you quickly categorize emails.

You can set up rules to put emails into different folders, be different colours, or even prioritize by sender. Check out the link at the end of this article to a video that teaches you how to program your inbox to do just this, as well as providing instructions on you how to link your emails to text messages for those emails you just can’t miss. This approach helps you target important emails, blocks out some of the noise, and keeps clutter to a minimum.

5. Use Your Calendar to Track Emails That Require Follow-up

Because some emails might require more than a simple reply, add them to your calendar. If you receive an email that requires not only an immediate response, but also some sort of follow-up action, move the email to a designated subfolder and put a reminder in your calendar that includes the folder location and the date when follow up is required.

Both Microsoft Outlook and Gmail have this function. Just click on the 'More' button in the toolbar, and select 'Create event'.

6. Don't Let Junk Mail Languish in Your Inbox

Be swift with the unsubscribe button. Here's a tip: use a three-strike rule for promotional emails and newsletters. The third time you delete a newsletter or promo email from a specific sender, without any action on your part, unsubscribe from the list.

7. Create Templates for Your Go-To Responses

Tailoring a different reply for every email can be a huge time-drain. If you find yourself sending the same type of email over and over again (particularly to parents!), you may benefit from keeping some [stock responses](#) in your drafts that you can easily reuse.

8. Set Aside Time Blocks for Checking Email—and Stick to Them

You probably wouldn't leave your schedule open for meetings of unspecified times and lengths around the clock, so why give email free rein to intrude on your day?

Set specific times during the day to go through each email and thoughtfully respond, archive, or save for later. This helps you to avoid multitasking, and to get through your emails more quickly by being focused on the task at hand. Start out with three different 30-minute blocks a day to read through and respond to emails; keep your inbox closed the rest of the day, and adjust as necessary from there.

In addition to using time-blocking to stay on top of daily email, set aside time once a week for inbox maintenance. Choose a time each week to maintain your inbox. Protect the time as you would any other important meeting and get organized.

9. Turn Off Email Notifications

Turn off your notifications. If you set up time blocks to review, you will never go more than a couple of hours without seeing your emails.

10. Squeeze in Mindless Email Tasks During Downtime

Ensure email accounts are effectively synched to your phone and use idle moments to do quick inbox clean-up.

Email Programming Instructions

Here is a clear, easy to follow video entitled: [Outlook Tips and Tricks to Take Control of Your Inbox.](#)

The video provides tips with programming instructions on how help prioritize and screen emails. *I will definitely be using my Archived box more often!*

The video is about 15 minutes long and the programming will take a little longer. However, the time invested to set up your inbox is time saved down the road!

For more email management tips, check out this link: [Effective Email Management: Tips and Tricks in 2022](#)

Good luck!