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Your mailbox is full: what to delete and how to stop it happening

Webmail & Mailboxes

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Your mailbox is full: what to delete and how to stop it happening

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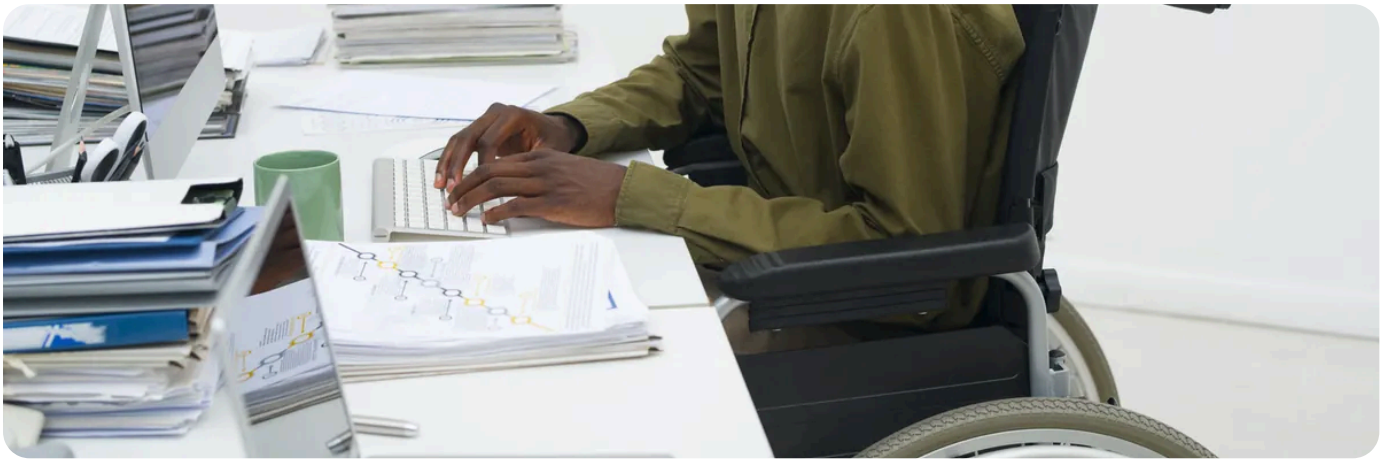

The signs are always the same: the phone stops syncing, webmail warns you that space is running out, and somebody rings to say the e-mail they sent bounced back. The good news is that a full mailbox is never a mystery. There are four places the space is usually hiding, and nobody looks at any of them.

First, why this happens invisibly

If your mail is set up over **IMAP**, and these days it almost always is, the messages **live on the server**. What you see on your phone is not a copy: it is a window onto the mailbox. That is why the same mail looks identical on the computer, the phone and webmail, and why deleting in one deletes everywhere. The space it takes is your account's space.

With **POP** it is different: the program downloads the mail and can keep it only on your computer. But nearly every setup has a «leave a copy on the server» option switched on, and it is that option, forgotten for years, that fills the mailboxes of people who swear they delete everything.

The four folders nobody opens

Folder	Why it weighs
Sent	Almost always the biggest one, and the last one anybody thinks of. Every quote, every invoice and every photo you ever sent is in there, attachment and all.
Trash	Deleting a message frees nothing: it moves it. The space only comes back when you empty the trash. We see trash folders with years in them.
Spam	Fills itself, every day, and most mail programs never show it to you. If nobody set up an automatic clear-out, everything since day one is still there.
Archive and drafts	The folders you made to tidy up still count. A draft with a 20 MB attachment that was never even sent takes exactly as much room as if it had been.

The problem is almost never the number of messages.
A full mailbox is usually half a dozen e-mails with heavy attachments, not twenty thousand short notes. That is why deleting the oldest ones barely helps: you are deleting the light ones.

Clearing out, in the order that pays

1. **Sort by size, not by date.** Webmail and most mail programs will sort messages by size. Deal with the top ten and you free more space than deleting a thousand old ones.
2. **Save the attachment, delete the message.** A PDF invoice belongs in a folder on your computer, not in a mailbox. Once you have the file, delete the e-mail.
3. **Empty Spam, then Trash.** In that order, because what you delete from spam lands in the trash.
4. **Do the same to Sent.** It is the hardest one psychologically and the one that frees the most.
5. **Empty the trash again at the end.** Everything you deleted in the steps above went through it. Until you empty it, the space does not come back and you will conclude none of this worked.

Seeing the size of each mailbox:
In cPanel, under the **Email** section, the list of e-mail accounts shows the space used and the quota for each one, side by side. To see which *folders* weigh inside a mailbox, **Disk Usage**, under the Files section, breaks the mail down folder by folder.

Raising the quota

1. In cPanel, under the **Email** section, open the e-mail accounts and use the manage option on the account in question.
2. Change the space allocated to that mailbox. It takes effect immediately and you do not need to ask us for anything.
3. **Watch the total.** A mailbox quota does not create space: it divides up the space your plan gives you, which is shared between the site, the databases and all the mail. Raising one mailbox takes room from the others.

4. If the sum no longer fits, the conversation becomes about the plan: see **the professional e-mail plans** or **the hosting plans**.

A full mailbox refuses new mail.
It does not wait forever: the server either bounces the message back to the sender, or keeps trying for a while and bounces it in the end. Either way the person who wrote to you gets a failure notice and you get nothing at all, not even a warning that you missed it. That is why this is urgent and not housekeeping.

Stopping it happening again

1. **Make trash and spam clear themselves.** You can set a rule that deletes anything sitting in those folders beyond a certain number of days. It is the one measure that works without any discipline from you.

2. **Do not use the mailbox as an archive.** Contracts, invoices and photos belong in a folder that gets backed up, not in a mailbox. A mailbox is a place things pass through.

3. **Send big files as a link.** A heavy attachment fills your mailbox *and* the recipient's, and it is one of the most common reasons a message gets refused.

4. **Careful with forwarders.** An address that forwards to another one on the same account keeps two copies of every message. On team mailboxes that multiplies fast.

5. **Glance at the account list once a month.** cPanel shows every mailbox and its usage on one screen. Thirty seconds a month and you are never caught out again.

If the mailbox belonged to someone who left
, do not leave it filling up. Save what matters, turn the address into a forwarder to whoever took over the role, and free the space. A forwarder uses no quota.

NEED A HAND?

Mailbox fills up again right away and you cannot see why? Send us the address and we will look at what is filling it.

Open a support ticket →

Where to see it in your account

- **Per mailbox:** in cPanel, Email Accounts lists each mailbox with the space it uses and its quota, side by side.
- **Whole account:** the Statistics sidebar shows the total space used and how many e-mail accounts exist.
- **What the plan gives:** e-mail accounts are unlimited on every plan, but they all share the plan's space: 10 GB on Pro, 20 GB on Plus, 30 GB on Ultra, and 50, 100 or 200 GB on Business Pro, Plus and Ultra.

The quota of a mailbox is shown when you create it, and you can change it later with Manage. It only divides the space of the plan between mailboxes; it never adds to it. When the sum no longer fits, you can move up a plan or talk to us.

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