Tame your Inbox: Organize messages by conversation

Quick Reference Card

Identify the current folder arrangement

The current folder arrangement is listed in the **Arrange By** box, which is located just under the **Search** box.

Switch between simple Date arrangement and Date (Conversations)

On the **View** tab, in the **Conversations** group, click **Show as Conversations** to select or clear the check box and then, in the **Microsoft Outlook** dialog box, indicate whether you want to apply the change to all Outlook folders or only to the current folder..

For **Date (Conversations)** arrangement, select the check box; for simple **Date** arrangement, clear it.

Switch between Date arrangements and non-Date arrangements

On the **View** tab, in the **Arrangement** group, do one of the following:

- If the gallery of arrangements is already displayed on the ribbon, click the arrangement that you want.
  Note You may have to open or scroll through the gallery to locate the arrangement that you want. To do this, use the buttons at the end of the gallery.

- If the gallery of arrangements is not already displayed on the ribbon, click the **Arrange By** button to open it, and then click the arrangement that you want.

Display messages that are located in other folders

On the **View** tab, in the **Conversations** group, click **Conversation Settings**, and then see whether **Show Messages from Other Folders** is displayed with a check mark. If the check mark is not displayed, click the command to add it.
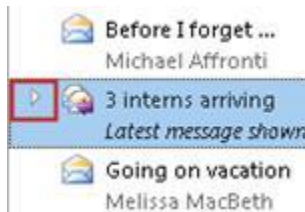
Notes

- Messages located in other folders are shown in gray italics.
- Messages in your **Deleted Items** folder do not appear in the list.
- This setting is "sticky" — that is, even if you switch to another arrangement and then return to **Date (Conversations)**, the option will remain turned on until you turn it off.

Identify multi-message conversations

To find out whether a conversation contains multiple messages, click the conversation to select it.

If there is a little triangle to the left of the conversation name, the conversation contains multiple messages.

Note   If the little triangle appears even when the conversation is not selected, at least two of the messages in the conversation are located in the current folder.

Identify multi-branch conversations

To find out whether a multi-message conversation contains more than one branch, click the conversation to select it, and then click the little triangle to fully expand the conversation.

If more than one big orange dot is displayed, the conversation has more than one branch. Each big orange dot is the most recent message in a single branch.
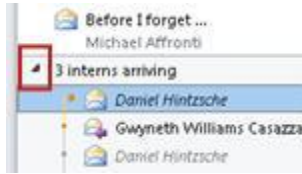
Select, expand, and collapse conversations

To select a conversation   Click it in the list.

If the conversation has more than one branch, and if the most recent messages in at least two of the branches are actually located in the current folder, only the most recent message in each branch is displayed, marked with its big orange dot. This way, you can read or respond to one of these most recent messages without further expanding the conversation.

To fully expand a conversation that you already selected   Click the little triangle beside the conversation name.

When the conversation is fully expanded, the triangle tilts down and turns dark.

To collapse a fully expanded conversation   Click the little triangle one more time.
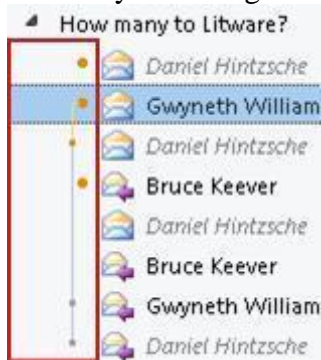
Read the conversation map

1. Select and fully expand any multi-branch conversation (one that has at least two big orange dots).

   Each big orange dot marks the most recent message in one branch of the conversation. *All* of the big orange dots are *always* displayed, no matter which branch is currently selected.
2. Click any of the big orange dot messages.

   Each of the earlier messages in the same branch of the conversation is identified by a little dot on the line.
   Little orange dots identify either the selected message or the message that it replied to.
   Little gray dots identify older messages. All little dots are in the same branch as the selected message.

3. Click an earlier message in the same branch to select it.

The line now ends at the message you selected.
More recent messages in that same branch no longer get dots, except the most recent message, which always has its big orange dot.

Use Clean Up to clear out redundant messages — in a conversation or a folder

1. Click either a conversation that you want to clean up or any conversation in a whole folder that you want to clean up.
2. On the **Home** tab, in the **Delete** group, click **Clean Up** and then, on the drop-down menu, click one of the following:

- **Clean Up Conversation** Cleans up the selected conversation.
- **Clean Up Folder** Cleans up all conversations in the current folder, but not those in the current folder's subfolders.
- **Clean Up Folder & Subfolders** Cleans up all conversations both in the current folder and in all of its subfolders.

Change where Clean Up sends messages

1. Click the **File** tab to open the Backstage view and then, in the left pane, click the **Options** button.
2. In the **Outlook Options** dialog box, click the **Mail** tab in the left pane, and then scroll down to the **Conversation Clean Up** section.
3. In the **Cleaned-up items will go to this folder** box, browse to and select the new destination folder, and then click **OK**.

Note The check boxes here provide additional options for customizing Clean Up.

Apply rules about which messages Clean Up removes

1. Click the **File** tab to open the Backstage view and then, in the left pane, click the **Options** button.
2. In the **Outlook Options** dialog box, click the **Mail** tab in the left pane, and then scroll down to the **Conversation Clean Up** section.
3. Select the check boxes for any rules that you want to apply.

Use Ignore to delete all messages in a conversation, including future ones

Click the conversation that you want to ignore and then, on the **Home** tab, in the **Delete** group, click **Ignore**.
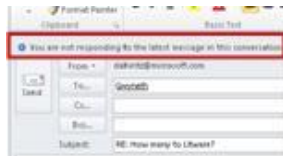
Stop ignoring a conversation

If you accidentally **Ignore** a conversation that you did not mean to, use this procedure to "unIgnore" it and return it to your Inbox:

1. In your **Deleted Items** folder, locate and select the conversation.
   When the conversation is selected, the **Ignore** button in the **Delete** group on the **Home** tab will appear "depressed" or selected.
2. Click the **Ignore** button and then, in the **Stop Ignoring Conversation** dialog box, click **Stop Ignoring Conversation**.
   Outlook will also resume routing incoming messages in the conversation to your Inbox.

Reply to the most recent message

If when replying to a message you see the following text just above the **Send** button:

You are not responding to the latest message in this conversation. Click here to open it.

Do one of the following:

- **To go ahead and reply to the message that you selected**   Ignore the warning and continue with your reply.
- **To reply to the most recent message in the conversation** Click the warning, and then click the **Open the Latest Message in This Conversation** command that appears.

Note   The "most recent" message that opens is the most recent message in the *whole* conversation. It may *not* be in the same branch as the message that you originally selected.

Move, copy, delete, flag, or categorize a whole conversation at once

The following descriptions apply only to actions taken when only the whole conversation is selected, and not to actions taken when any specific branch or message is selected.

- **Move, Copy, or Delete** The action affects only those messages actually located in the current folder, not messages located in other folders (those listed in gray italics).
- **Categorize** The category is applied to all messages displayed in the conversation, regardless of each message's actual folder location, and also to all future messages in the conversation.
- **Flag** The flag is applied only to the most recent message in the conversation that is actually located in the current folder.

Note   New messages arriving in the conversation will not cause the flag to move from the message to which it was originally applied.