# Getting control of emails with filters

Spent any time Googling how to sort your email messages in Gmail? Pretty frustrating, right? While there is not the ability to sort, per se, in Gmail, you can get quite a bit done with filtering. When you think about why you want to sort, it is usually to locate a particular message or set of messages from one individual or on a particular subject. Here are several ways to find the needles in the Gmail haystack.

From search
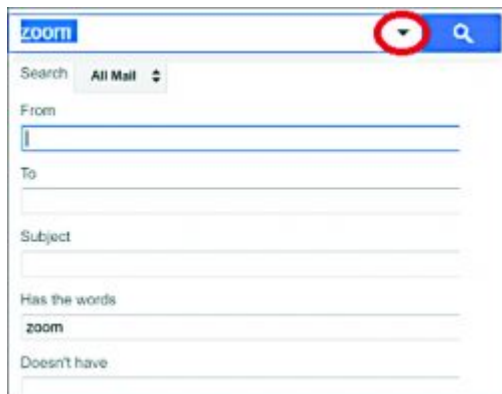
At the top of the message list in Gmail is the Search field. If you find yourself searching for the same thing over and over, before you just go to the messages you found, click the down arrow at the right of the search field and create a filter. Complete any additional criteria and click the link at the bottom right. Now, you can start it, label it, forward it, just about anything you'd like.

When you've chosen the desired action, click the Create filter button at the bottom left of the dialog box. If you change your mind at any point, click the "x" in the upper right corner of the dialog box.

To clear the filter, click the Inbox again. You can also start from a blank filter template by just clicking the drop down arrow in the Search field and completing the fields manually.

From sender

Hovering over the sender of a message will reveal a pop up box with some general information about the sender. At the bottom of the pop-up box are two options, Add to contacts and Emails.
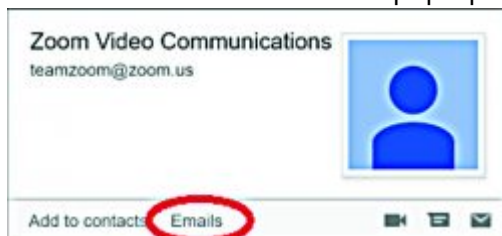
Selecting Emails will create a from and to search in the search box. From here as well, you can click on the down arrow in the Search field to create a filter that will label it, archive it, etc.

However, you'll notice that it puts "from" and "to search" in Has the words field. Cut and paste the email address to the From field. Clear the other fields and then proceed by clicking Create filter with this search at the bottom.

If you'd also like to create the same search for email to this address, click the down arrow from the search box, even if it's blank, and paste the address in the To field and repeat the steps to create your filter. As long as you've not copied anything else, it should still be in the clipboard to be pasted.

Filter actions

When you decide to create a filter, you must decide what should be done when the filter criteria are met. Here are some choices and how they can be best used.

- Skip the Inbox and archive directly. Use this for messages you don't intend to read, but need to hang onto for reference. To avoid creating more clutter, don't use this selection for messages you should really delete.
- The Delete choice is great for messages you don't want, but technically are not spam, for example, if a co-worker sends information about social activities in which you have no interest.
- Starring an email can give it high visibility in the Inbox. Use this for messages about which you need to take action.
- Categorizing email allows you to group into the tabs you see at the top of your message list, such as Personal, Social, Promotions, Updates, and Forums.
- Labeling email displays the message with the label keyword. It also creates a way to quickly see only messages with that label by clicking the label name in the navigation list.