

## Setting up an autoresponder in Gmail is quite easy when you know how

What is an autoresponder? Also, known as an “out of office” reply, it is an automatic reply sent by your email provider to someone who sends you an email. It is typically used to let people know that you are probably not immediately available to respond to the message they have just sent you (eg because you are on holiday).

Setting up an autoresponder does not affect your ability to receive, read, or even respond to incoming email. It just sends an automatic message (of your own creation) to let the person know you are probably “not there” at the moment. You can still check your email when you are poolside in Florida (or [Skegness](#)) and you can still answer it in the normal way if you wish.

Different email providers offer slightly different options. Some, for instance, allow you to specify the exact times (as well as the days) during which the autoresponder will do its job. Others, like Gmail, switch it on and off for whole days at a time.

So, let’s go through how you set up an autoresponder in Gmail (see, also, the figures at the bottom of this blog):

1. Log in to your Gmail account in the usual way (eg, by clicking on the “gmail” link on the page at [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) and entering your credentials).
2. Click on the “settings” gearwheel icon towards the top righthand corner of the screen.
3. Click on the “settings” option about two thirds of the way down the menu.
4. There is a list of “tabs” that pop up from left to right (from “General” to “Themes”). Make sure that the “General” tab is selected (by clicking on it).
5. Scroll down the screen until you see a section headed “Out of Office AutoReply” and then complete the section as follows:
  - a. Click the “radio button” next to “Out of Office AutoReply On”. This will put a black dot in the circle.
  - b. Click the white space next to “First day” and click on the calendar on the starting day for the autoreply. Note that you can move forward to different months by clicking the right-pointing chevrons (double arrows) next to the month’s name at the top of the calendar.
  - c. You can either enter an ending date for the autoresponder, or leave it blank (maybe you’ll choose to stay in [Skegness](#) indefinitely).
  - d. Enter a subject. This will be the “subject line” of the email your correspondent will receive – eg “Thanks for your message. I’m away for a few days”.
  - e. Enter the “body” of the message in the large white box – eg “I’m going to be away from October 4th until October 18th. I’ll respond to the email message I’ve just received from you as soon as I can.”
  - f. If you would prefer that only people in your contacts list should receive this autoreponse, then click on the radio button next to that option. The reason for having this option is that sending these autoreponses does two things that you might find undesirable:
    - You are confirming that your email address is valid and that you are using

it. This is valuable information for spammers.

- You are saying that you are not where you usually are! if you are the sort of person who wouldn't put an address label on a suitcase because it tells anyone seeing it that your house is probably empty (and, therefore, eminently burgle-worthy), then you might think there are security implications in using autoresponses.

6. Click on the "Save Changes" button slightly further down the screen.

The advantages of using autoresponders are that they are a considerate, and even professional, way of dealing with the problem of leaving correspondents wondering why you aren't replying to their email. After all, most of us expect that an email will probably be answered within two or three days at most. Autoresponders solve this problem.



Figure 1. Gmail - Sign In link

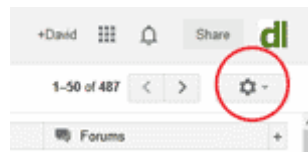


Figure 2. The Gmail Settings Gear

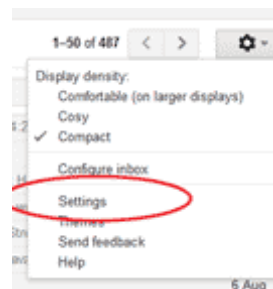


Figure 3. The Settings option



Figure 4. The General tab

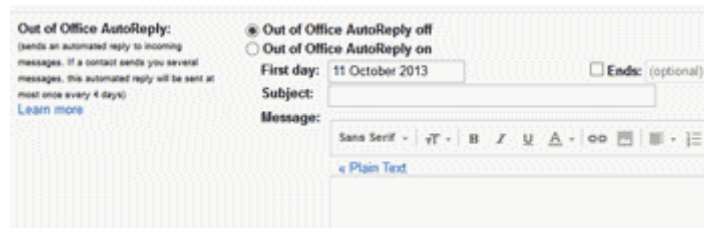


Figure 5. The Out Of Office options

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