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EMAIL
SURVIVAL SKILLS

Survival Tips Compatible with Microsoft Outlook 2010 & 2013

By Karla Brandau
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Email Survival Skills

Do you have the right tools in your backpack?

All Survival Tips Compatible with Microsoft Outlook 2010 & 2013

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Introduction

The nature of email has dramatically changed since 1971 when it first came on the scene. It went from a novel way of corresponding to a variety of people to a major tool for communication in every company around the world.

Physical letters used to be a way to keep in touch with family and friends who lived far away, like my parents. I left them in Idaho and made my way south to Atlanta, Georgia to seek my fortune. Unfortunately, email has replaced sending letters through the mail to loved ones, which could be read and reread, and then carefully folded and tucked away to be read again at a future date.

Even if an email contained something personal that would be appealing to keep, the thought of cutting down trees to print out the email keeps most emails in the computer and stored in an archived place that is never to be found again.

If you have loved ones who don't like email or don't use email, communication with them may be limited to an annual Christmas card. However, even Christmas cards are being replaced by emails and electronic holiday cards.

On a flight to Los Angeles last week, I overheard a conversation between two women. The first woman said she would rather have been born a homesteader on a ranch in the 1800's than have to open and answer email messages. This woman did not understand the marvelous points about email. You use it because you want:

1. Speed, not snail mail.

2. To communicate with a colleague, employee or customer in a country on the opposite side of the world during your own waking hours.

3. To send a message to many different people simultaneously. With email, you can send an email to one or 1,000 people and deliver the same message to them.

4. Instant and constant accessibility from any device you own.

5. When on a tight deadline, you can work the weekend and email your finished product to your manager or team leader on Sunday night, and they will never know because they have it first thing Monday morning; unless Murphy's Law prevails and your internet is down.

Even though these are valid reasons for having email, if you are the recipient of hundreds of emails per day, then it can take on an oppressive nature that causes minor depression and major emotional blues.

When you open your inbox and emails start dumping in, questions race through your mind: How can I stop the avalanche, or the deluge? How can I survive the volume of work contained in simple emails? Can't SPAM be stopped? How can I get through these by the end of the day? How can I organize them? How can I get through the workload when several emails contain requests that require 2-3 hours of work?

This book is written to help you survive 21st century email. Enjoy!

For webinars and in-house training on time management, goal setting, procrastination, surviving email and balance life issues,

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Email is a Major Factor

Email is a major factor in conducting business in companies all over the world. In this age of instantaneous electronic communications, business simply could not keep up with the pace of information that is exchanged without email. Thank heavens it replaced business letter writing and faxes, which were heavily used in the 20th century.

When you consider reading and responding to emails on a daily basis, email takes a major investment of your time. In fact, current studies find that up to half of your working hours may be spent plowing through emails or other forms of electronic communication such as instant messaging (IM), texts, and contributing to conversations on social networks.

The process overwhelms most people and quite frankly it puts them in a bad mood daily.

Survival requires a paradigm shift, to use a word popular for decades. It requires a shift from rolling your eyes and shutting your ears to the sucking sound of lost time and the realization that email SAVES you time.

Some business transactions are completed entirely by email, eliminating the need for personal visits, saving time and gasoline. Email reduces the irritating game of telephone tag and the time spent in social niceties required by one-on-one or face-to-face interactions. Not that being polite and friendly is not required in an email, but email is much more straight-forward and bottom-line oriented than personal visits or phone conversations.

Email is a time saver so change your attitude and use the survival tips in this book. You'll be pleasantly pleased with the results if you do. Together we'll examine email from its ups and downs, ins and outs, and round-abouts. We'll examine how corporate culture affects email and what you can do to quickly process the entire inbox while enabling yourself to reduce your stress from the daily deluge of email.

More importantly, the principles in this book will help you save time when processing your inbox.

Survival Equipment for Outdoor Adventures

Any outdoor activity, even if it's just hiking down a forest path, requires safety steps. That way you don't get lost, twist an ankle, get bitten by an insect, or worse a snake.

I remember walking down a well-trodden path in a wooded public park on the south side of the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta, Georgia. I turned around to say something to my friend and wondered why her eyes were so big. I had just missed stepping on a water moccasin that was slithering away.

Outdoor activities are invigorating and the exercise helps us burn extra pounds. Serious outdoor activities such as backpacking, biking, kayaking, rafting, and rappelling in addition to safety steps all need special equipment and gear for survival.

For the purposes of this email survival book, let's stick to hiking. To survive a several day hike on any mountainous terrain from the Appalachian Trail to the Western Rockies, you need:

- Backpack
- Sturdy footwear
- First-aid supplies
- Navigation (map and compass) GPS system
- Sun protection
- Binoculars
- Repair kit and tools
- Knife
- Multi-tool knife or Swiss Army Knife
- Signaling equipment
- Hydration
- Illumination (headlamp/flashlight)
- Fire
- Nylon cord
- Insulation
- Nutrition
- Waterproof outer wear

Email Survival Equipment

Just as you need a backpack loaded with the right gear for your high adventures in the wilderness, to survive the deluge of email you get every day you will need to pack your brain with technical savvy and time management principles. This book will do both, so I invite you to read on.

The Right Tool: The Backpack – Microsoft Outlook

Different forms of backpacks have been used for centuries to help humans carry heavy loads of weight. The backpack of today has evolved into a sophisticated bag with limitless choices in color, fabric, weight, and pockets.

With all of the choices, it is important to evaluate the options and pick the right backpack for your outdoor adventure with compartments for every piece of survival gear you need.

In a similar manner, it is important to pick the right technological tool, or backpack, with all the features you need to quickly process email.

There are many excellent choices, but this instruction uses Microsoft Outlook as the tool. It has many 'compartments' for saving you time and helping you become more productive. This book is about email, but the other Outlook folders, Tasks, Contacts, and the Calendar, are complimentary to the Inbox and simply add to your productivity.

Email is Sturdy Footwear for Your Business Day

After picking the right backpack for your outdoor adventure, the next purchase should be sturdy footwear. You need a pair of shoes that are strong, durable, and broken in – not brand new.

When we were first married, my husband and I went on a one day hike in the Uinta Mountains. Being concerned about my gear, he purchased a sturdy pair of shoes for me to wear. The shoes were wonderful, but they were not broken in. Soon I had blisters, and walking barefoot was a relief. After wearing the shoes around the house and getting them to mold to my feet, they were perfect for future hikes.

Even though we may not like to admit it, email is the basic tool for business communication. When it comes to dispensing information, it is like sturdy footwear in your survival kit.

While you might groan when you see messages flooding your inbox, let's recount the benefits that email has provided corporate America. Before email communication, in order to ask a simple question or request vacation time, you had to schedule a few minutes with your manager. Important documents had to be mailed overnight (costing time and money) to clients or other branch offices.

Some projects had specifications that were continually changing. In some cases, documents were not ready to be shipped by the overnight-mail deadline either. If this was the case, the documents had to be faxed. Since fax machines lacked the laser technology that is so prevalent today, this meant administrative personnel had to re-type the information from the fax, format it, and then submit it. In today's world, all we would need to do is open an email and attach the document. While we all know that email technology was not present in the 1970s, many times we forget that this technology was just beginning to catch on in the early 1990s.

The mail and fax process was time consuming and expensive, but corporations had no alternative until email came into the picture. Now an office can email an attachment, which usually requires no additional formatting or typing. Employees can focus on other tasks, rather than rework. Someone can send an important presentation to a client within a few minutes' time rather than overnight.

When it comes to email survival techniques, email represents sturdy and reliable footwear for your business. It saves every person in the company precious time.

Fill Your Mind, Just like You Fill the Backpack

Once you have purchased the right backpack and found sturdy shoes that your feet love, you work to fill the backpack with just the right supplies you personally prefer to help you survive as you experience your hike.

In a similar manner, opening your daily email is an adventure, and you need to fill the backpack in your mind with survival tools and techniques; starting with first aid supplies.

Band-Aids and Salve for Your Mind (or First Aid Supplies)

One of the first things to go in your backpack should be a first aid kit. You will need ointment and Band-Aids for scratches and cuts. How does this relate to email? Email can deliver scratches and small cuts all day long, which leave you needing mental and emotional band-aids. When you receive a cryptic, sarcastic or downright ugly email, you need to apply a good dose of mental and emotional suave and Band-Aids.

The downside to email is tone. You can't hear the tone of someone's voice and you can't see their body language. This means you may interpret a statement as hurtful when the sender meant it to be funny. You miss the humorous sarcasm because you don't hear the tone and see the body language.

Apply salve and Band-Aids, and give the sender the benefit of the doubt. Don't let today's productivity be stopped by negative thoughts about the sender and don't spend time calculating how to get even with them.

Stay True to Your Priorities: Carry Navigation Tools

You may not make it back to your starting point unless you carry with you and know how to use navigation tools; a map, compass and/or GPS system.

This graph represents your navigation system or map through email. The next points will discuss these steps.
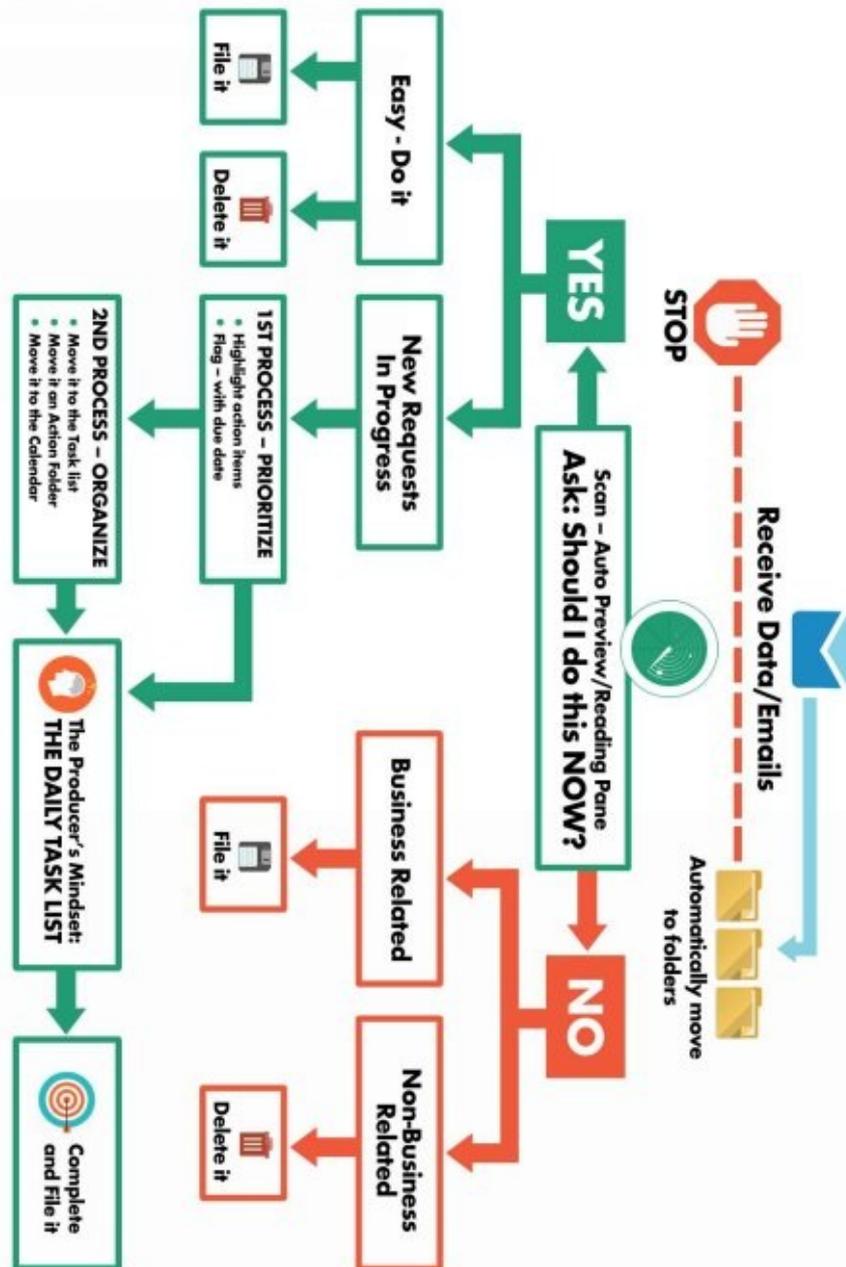
Tip: 'Easy – Do it' means emails you can answer within 5 minutes.

The compass you carry with you is considered a navigation tool, but it has another purpose. A compass points to true north. When it comes to email, the compass represents savvy prioritizing of the work contained in the message. True north means that as you prioritize, you stay true to your commitments and the plans you have made for the day, week and month.

Stop Email: Sun Protection

Unless you plan on hiking in dense forestry every hour of the day, you'll need sunburn and eventually skin cancer prevention; sunglasses, sunscreen and a hat with a wide brim are all recommended.

Protection from the bright light of the sun, or prevention, in email terms means you keep email from ever entering your inbox in the first place. Here are some tips:

1. Install SPAM filters. If you work in a large corporation, they probably have a good firewall. Google has good filters on their Gmail accounts. Microsoft Outlook has a trust center with a few settings that help dissuade spam. If you are an entrepreneur or work in a small startup, then web hosting services offer SPAM filters at extremely reasonable rates.

2. Think twice before you sign up for newsletters containing "Can't live without information" when you are researching, learning or just having fun online. My experience is that giving up your email address makes emails proliferate like breeding gerbils.
One option is to have an email designated specifically for online information. Keep it separate and distinct from your professional or personal email. For instance, you could have a Gmail account that is anonymous, such as SillyFrog@gmail.com. Use this for all downloads of non-pertinent information.

3. A technical way to stop emails from entering your Inbox relates to the philosophy that you have about your Inbox. Is it a library? Meaning, you have no problem with a couple thousand or more emails in your Inbox. Or, do you get hives if you quit work and still have 10 or 20 emails to process? If you are the latter, I recommend using the Outlook Rules Wizard to automatically route emails to specific folders.

Using the Rules Wizard, you can route emails for projects, from specific people or from company departments to folders where they safely wait for you to open and process them. A perfect example is a routine email from Human Resources. You need the information, but not in your productive mode, which is hours during your work day that you are focusing and pushing out work. Set the Rules Wizard to automatically route the HR emails to a folder that you can check at your own leisure.
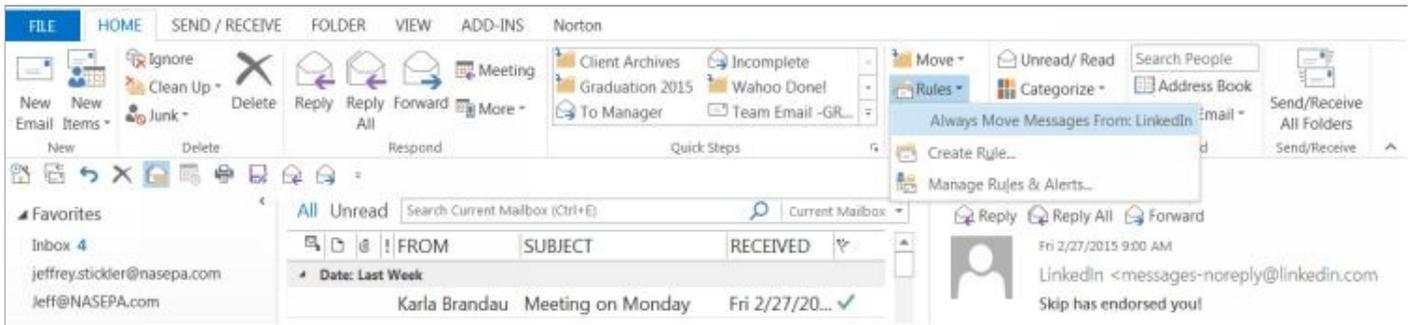
These tips will help you prevent the slow sunburn of emails that may have some value, but are not important to your daily productivity.

Scan Your Inbox: Binoculars

Binoculars help you see what is on the next hill or down in the valley, or how close that big brown bear is to you. They scan the horizon for potential dangers and help you choose a safer trail.

When it comes to email, binoculars stand for scanning the inbox for the easy stuff to complete or ignore, like the pleasant good news emails and the potential time bombs that are about to go off.

Scanning your inbox is the first thing you should do before you start processing emails because you could spend two hours handling the most recent emails that have entered your inbox and then shut your computer down before discovering an urgent email from your manager that was the first in your Inbox at 7:00 A.M., which reads, "Need reply by 8:30 A.M." Oops…

Emails that catch our attention and we open first often have nothing to do with the work we need to complete for the day. For instance, you had a health checkup with your doctor and you see an email from her nurse with the subject line "Blood Work." How far would this email throw your day off?

> We just received the results on your blood work from your appointment yesterday afternoon and everything seems to check out as normal. However, instead of giving you your routine tetanus shot, we injected you with radioactive spider blood.
>
> Now, you should be just fine. This is a pretty common mistake amongst hospitals. However, just to be on the safe side, if you notice any new abilities (being able to climb walls, being able to shoot spider webs, having a new spidey sense) then go ahead and give us a call back so we can set up an appointment for you.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Daisy Richardson, Chief Executive Nurse

This nonsense email makes the point that you open messages that raise emotions and throw your focus off in many ways. If this were a legitimate email about your blood work, you would naturally be distracted for good reason. However, we spend time in a myriad of emails that have little to do with our prioritized task list. Emails from friends – especially if they contain office gossip – are prime culprits of lost productivity.

To keep productivity high, scan through your emails as if you are looking at them with binoculars. Evaluate their importance. Sort them by sender or by subject line. Have the reading pane open so you get a sense of what is needed. If the email is of high importance, mark it as unread or flag it for quick reference. Once you are finished scanning your new emails, you can begin processing.

Email Etiquette: Repair Kit and Tools

Who knows what you will need to repair on the trail, so keep a few tools in your backpack to fix punctures in mattresses or bike tires, tears in your backpack or tent, or to sharpen your knife.

Not knowing what you will have to repair on the trail, I recommend carrying duct tape. One experienced camper told me he wraps a few pieces of duct tape around his water bottle so it is immediately ready in case of an emergency. He calls it part of his poor man's repair kit.

As repair and tools relate to email, it is much better to use proper email etiquette as a tool for success than to do repairs. Proper etiquette includes:

- Running a spell check before you send the email, and don't forget the subject line. It needs to be spell checked as well. One email subject line was supposed to read "Public Hearing at 2:00" but read "Pubic Hearing at 2:00."
- Checking the context before you push 'send.' An email I received had stated: "Your email pooped back to me" instead of "Your email popped back to me." Be sure to read through your message, analyzing the meaning conveyed to the reader and to find miscues that spell check won't catch.
- Returning a quick email to the sender if you cannot complete the request in a timely manner. It will reduce tension between you and the sender if you let the sender know when you can complete the task.

Examples of hard things to repair are:

- Using 'Reply to All' and CC for ego reasons, hoping you will get kudos for what you did.
- Sending a BCC to someone who opens it, but doesn't realize she is BCC and then replies to all.
- Writing IN ALL CAPS UNLESS YOU REALLY MEAN TO YELL AT THE PERSON.
- Using emoticons as an attempt for humor or to lighten the mood instead of looking for descriptive words.
- Making every email subject line read: High Priority! Must Respond Immediately – and then they find out you were only crying wolf. You will desensitize the readers and they may routinely skip your emails.

Use the appropriate email tools and etiquette and avoid the repair kit.

Click and Drag: Sharp Knife

Even though a knife could technically fall under 'Repair Kit and Tools,' I believe it needs a separate mention because a good sharp knife is critical for outdoor survival. The knife cuts rope, sharpens small branches into spears (or sticks for roasting marshmallows), helps cut branches for making an emergency shelter and provides boredom relief in a myriad of ways. A sharp knife is better than a dull knife, so be sure to add a knife sharpener to your repair kit.

Two specific Microsoft Outlook Inbox features can sharpen your productivity and save you time. Both are click and drag techniques, one to the Calendar and one to Tasks.

The first feature is click and drag to the calendar. When you look at your Inbox and are in the pre-assessment or scanning mode with your binoculars and you see an email containing a task that is URGENT and has a deadline needing a quick turnaround, click on that email and drag it to your calendar. A calendar item will open. Fill in the information completely with the date and time slot of when you plan on completing the task. It now becomes part of your workflow on a specific date. Your mind is at rest because you know the task is scheduled and will not be forgotten.

As you scan through your emails, undoubtedly, you will find one that has a one sentence simple request but will take you up to 10 hours to complete. An example is, "Brandon, find a hotel for the annual planning retreat and make sure golf is convenient."

Click on this email and drag it into the Tasks folder. In the Tasks folder, you can organize it, plan the execution, execute, and send the necessary information back to the requester.

These two click-and-drag techniques work like a sharp knife to help you take control of the thunderstorm of email entering your Inbox on a daily basis.

As mentioned above, a sharp knife is used for cutting. Cutting is a valuable email tool as you can:

- Cut the fluff.
- Cut the content by addressing one topic per email.
- Cut the time the receiver takes to read the email by using bullet points and numbered lists.
- Cut the number of emails you return. Sometimes a return email with only a "Thank You" is unnecessary.

These tips will cut the time you spend per email.

Customize Column Headings: Multi-Tool Knife

Another tool in your Repair Kit that needs a separate category is the multi-tool knife. A Swiss Army Knife is an excellent example of a "must have" multi-tool knife for your backpack. With it you have a wire stripper, corkscrew, bottle opener, screwdriver, scissors, tweezers and a toothpick – to name just some of the most important features of the multi-tool knife.

In a similar fashion, like a Swiss Army Knife, Microsoft Outlook has many options or tools to help you organize and process an amazing array of information if you know how to manipulate the tool.

For instance, the column headings are a good place to take advantage of the tools that the Inbox offers. Standard Inbox headings include the Icon, From, Subject, Received and Flag Status. Flag Status is constant and cannot be removed, but you can add more tools to the column headings.

Additional informational headings you may like or need are CC, BCC, Attachments High Priority, and Size.

To add the additional column headings to the Inbox, follow these simple steps:

- Click on the View Tab
- Move to the Arrangement Group and choose "Add Columns."
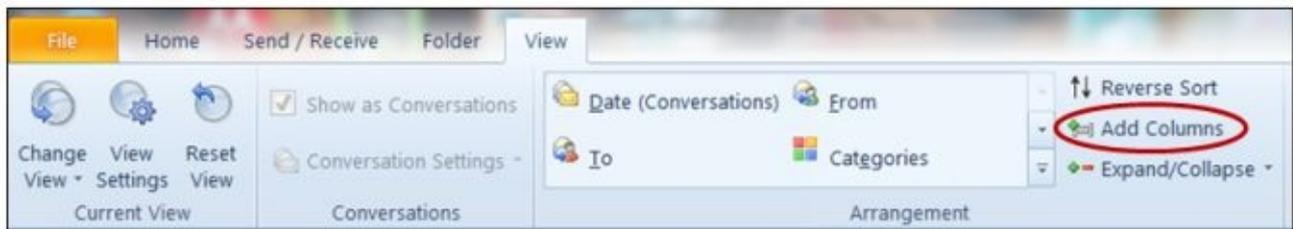
The box below will appear. Whatever information you need to see, highlight the heading and click "Add." It will be added to the column headings and information will magically appear. Move the desired column headings from the Available columns dialog box on the left to the dialog box on the right that says "Show these columns in this order."
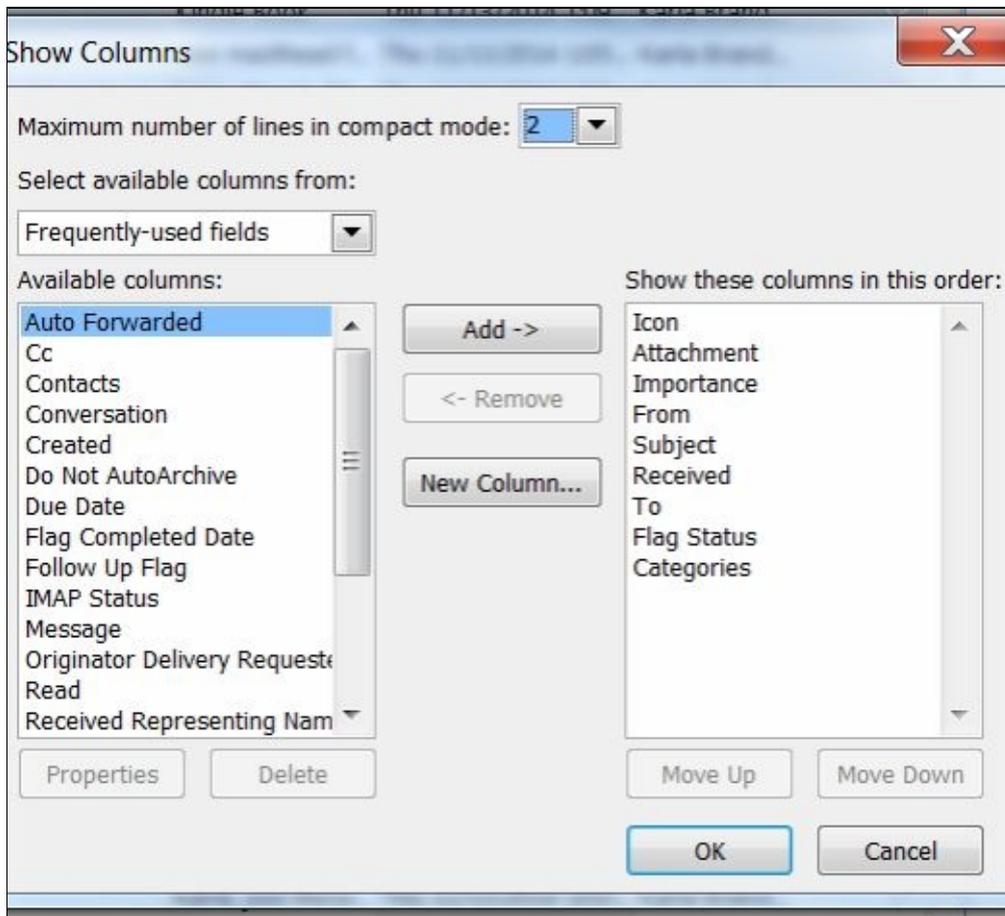
Notice you can highlight a column and move it up or down in the list. You may also remove an unwanted column.

Inline Comments: Signaling Equipment

Sometimes the unthinkable happens when you are in the wilderness; you get disoriented and wonder where you are. You might even get lost, which makes signaling equipment critical to your survival. Signaling equipment includes a mirror that reflects sunlight and works like a beacon pointing right to your location, or a whistle to audibly tell searchers where you are located.

The Outlook email feature that corresponds to signaling equipment is Replies and Forwards, previously called Inline Comments. In my opinion, Inline comments describe the process.

Inline comments are useful when you receive a problematic email that is several paragraphs long, and contains many questions and is written in run-on sentences. To enable inline comments, follow these instructions:

- Go to the File Tab
- Click on Options
- Click on Mail
- Scroll down to Replies and Forwards
- Click the checkbox for "Preface comments with"
- Type your name in the box
- Click 'Ok'

Open the problematic email and hit reply. Move your cursor to a point in the reply where you can intelligently comment. As soon as you start to type, your name will be inserted with your comments.

Inline Comments sends out a signal that you have an opinion or an answer for the person asking for your expertise and tells them your exact location.

Other Humans: Hydration

Live Science says, "You can live 3 minutes without air and 3 hours without shelter in a harsh environment, such as a snow storm. But after 3 days, you'll need water or you'll perish." For your outdoor adventure, pack plenty of water or some kind of water purification tablets or filters. Stay hydrated as you hike.

How does this apply to email? Just as you can't live without water, you can't live without other humans. The reason we band together in companies is to share our strengths and expertise so everyone can benefit.

Not only do you share the workload and produce more together, but team members will keep you "hydrated," meaning they can encourage you, mentor you and at times cover for your limitations.

Encouragement or hydrating others should be a two-way street. Take every opportunity to reassure and cheer others on, covering for their weaknesses whenever possible.

Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's stated, "Support is the boost you can give someone who can help himself but who needs a partner to open a window or push aside a roadblock."

To hydrate others, use email to:

- Remember birthdays with a "Happy Birthday" wish.
- Reassure others. If your team is struggling to finish a project by the deadline, you might send a stimulating message to them urging optimism that they can finish by the deadline. This message may work: "A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties." ~ Harry S. Truman
- Add an inspirational message to your signature. One of my friends placed this important quote after her signature: "Leadership is based on inspiration, not domination; on cooperation, not intimidation." ~ William Arthur Wood

One more tip about hydration: Keep the water pure. Filter out debris in email conversations because there are always statements that could be taken the wrong way. Give the sender respect and esteem. If you do, hydration will be a true two-way street.

Writing Clear Emails: Illumination

Excellent illumination is critical for an overnight outing. When the sun goes down you will need not only a fire, but a lantern, flashlight or headlamp.

Illumination applies to the writing aspects of email. You illuminate your reader in a variety of ways. Excellent illumination in your email makes the message easy to understand, and easy to write a response to and send back.

There are 4 steps to illumination in your email:

1. Write a great subject line that summarizes the content of the email. Consider the difference in these headlines:

   "Urgent – Read Now" Vs. "Email Accounts Shut Down on the 1st if No Response to this Email"

   Which would you open and quickly reply to with the requested information? The second subject line, of course.

2. Write your email so the bottom line – your request – is positioned in the subject line and/or the first line of your email. To correspond to the subject line above, your first line would say, "In order to comply with new company email guidelines, we need you to respond by the 1st with the following information. Failure to do so will result in your account being suspended."

   In your following paragraphs you can list the information needed and explain more about the new policies.

3. Organize your message in short, easy-to-read sentences. No run on sentences or worse yet, run on paragraphs!

4. Use bullet points or numbered lists which make the information easy to grasp. For a busy person scanning through a hundred emails, easy to read means easy to understand and return.

Following these simple suggestions of illumination will help your reader quickly comprehend what you need and will ensure a faster response from them. People will actually read your emails.

Need a business/email writing class at your company? [Click here for information on booking](#) one of the "Time for Results" experts.

Don't Hide Behind the Terminal: Fire

No one would go on an outdoor adventure without a way to start a campfire. Just to be on the safe side I would pack regular matches, waterproof matches in a waterproof container – and something to strike the match with – and an entire package of cigarette lighters, just in case we needed a bonfire.

Without realizing it, email can become a bonfire if you send messages written in anger, criticizing an employee, rejecting an idea, giving an undesirable employee performance review or containing countless other negative statements you may not have uttered if you had been face-to-face.

Don't hide behind the terminal.

Email bonfires are also caused because of imprecise interpretations. The reader cannot see the twinkle in your eye if you are gently teasing or catch a sarcastic tone of voice. If these nuances are not clear, human nature makes us assume the worst.

To reduce the frustration you feel inside, go ahead and write an angry retort you feel the sender deserves – then delete it! In past decades we would say to write it and throw it in the fire.

To avoid email bonfires, never try to manage employees by email. Resolve this very moment to never communicate sensitive, emotion laden messages by email. Pick up the phone and have a real conversation or make an appointment and walk into their office. Never have a sensitive conversation in the hallway or the break room.

Sensitive and emotional conversations need to be had face-to-face so you can read the body language, listen to the tone of voice and look into the eyes. Only in a person-to-person conversation do you comprehend the entire story. When you read their eyes, you can tell if there is critical information they have not shared. Once you have the entire story, you have the luxury of negotiating options and working for a solution that satisfies both parties. Stephen R. Covey is famous for urging us to look for win/win decisions.

Be upfront. Be honest. Be transparent and use these tips to avoid email bonfires. You'll be glad you did because bonfires can quickly use up all the hydration and good that you spent years creating.

Search Functions: Nylon Cord

Like Duct tape, there are many uses for a strong nylon cord on your outdoor adventure. It can hoist food up a tree to keep it away from wildlife, help you build an emergency shelter, lash poles together and even help make a splint for broken bones. It tethers you to safety in many ways.

The search functions in email serve the same purpose: they tether you to important information without which you may be fanatically circling while looking for the return path. As you circle, you realize that you've seen that same oak tree with "Trey loves Jenny" carved in it at least 5 times. Needing vital information that you know you stored somewhere can set your entire body in commotion.

The search functions in Outlook, like a nylon cord, tether you to vital information for quick retrieval.

Here are some ways you can search in Microsoft Outlook:

1. Enter a search term into the 'Search Inbox' dialog box, and then any email containing your search term will be found.

2. Search the Inbox by clicking on any column heading: Attachment, From, Subject, Received or Flag Status. The Inbox will automatically sort by that column heading.

3. Highlight a person's email and then click the 'From' column heading. All emails from that person will be grouped together.

Subfolders in the Inbox are critical for retrieving information. Some users will set subfolders for each month or perhaps each year. Others archive by the name of the person while others still archive by the project number or name. Choose a system that works best for you and your work habits.

TIP: Ever wonder what to do with those miscellaneous emails that can seem to find a home in a subfolder by person or project? Create an archive folder then pull all homeless emails that have not been deleted into this archive folder named "Miscellaneous" or "Homeless." This is brilliant because all the search functions just described for your main Inbox still work perfectly in the archive folder and you have not had to do the emotional work of deciding what to do with the email or where to store it.

Use these tips and your information will be forever tethered to a place easy to find.

Voting Buttons: Insulation

You will want to ensure that you will be insulated against the cold. As room in your backpack permits, load it with an extra set of clothing, an extra sweater to increase warm layers, a beanie, hand warmers, and a cozy sleeping bag.

A little known feature of Outlook provides insulation from cold stares and frigid attitudes from co-workers. This feature is Voting Buttons. Voting Buttons make it easy to include co-workers in the decision-making process and insulates you against moving forward without consensus or making a decision without the proper information or an opinion from each person involved.

When you use voting buttons, you send out an email that asks the recipients to vote on two or more options. When they send back their responses, Outlook tallies the votes for you thus allowing you to move forward in confidence that other people have had a voice and will support the decision.

To use Voting Buttons, follow these directions:

- Open a new email.
- Type your subject line and message.
- Move to the Options Tab.
- Choose "Use Voting Buttons" from the Tracking Group.
- Decide if your request is Approve; Reject | Yes; No | Yes; No; Maybe.
- Click your choice and a message will appear at the top of your email that states, "You have added voting buttons to this message."
- When the recipients receive your message they can vote. As the messages are returned, they are automatically tallied for you.

TIP: The default is Approve; Reject | Yes; No | Yes; No; Maybe. It is easy to put in your own voting criteria. For instance, if you want input on where to hold Ralph's retirement dinner, click on "Use Voting Buttons" and choose Custom.

When the dialog box opens, Approve; Reject will be highlighted. Merely type in your own choices such as Chili's;OutbackSteakhouse;RedLobster. CAUTION: You MUST type a semicolon (;) between each choice or the Voting Buttons will not work.
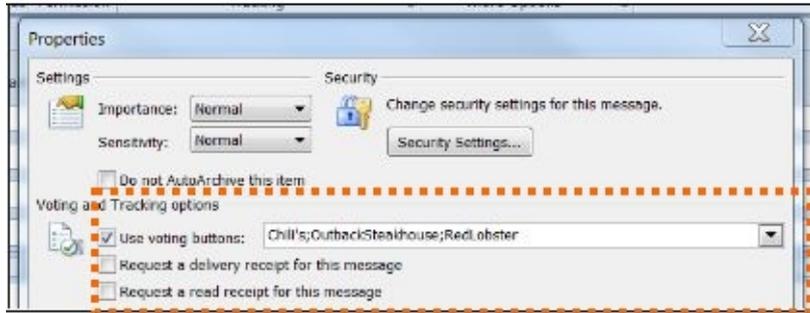
Keyboard Shortcuts: Nutrition

Seasoned hikers pack dehydrated food because it doesn't weigh down the backpack and permits them to progress on the hike at a more rapid pace than carrying heavy food would permit. When water is added to dehydrated food, you get filled up faster.

Keyboard shortcuts are similar to dehydrated food; they are easy to use and increase the speed at which you can move between options. You won't get weighed down with wait times as you move about in your Inbox.

E-Z Keyboard shortcuts for the Outlook Inbox are featured in the table below:

Desired Action	Keyboard Shortcut
Move from another folder (Calendar, Contacts, Tasks) to the Inbox	**Ctrl + 1**
Move between messages while in the Inbox	**Arrow down or Arrow up, depending on the direction you want to move**
Create a new message while in the Inbox	**Ctrl + n**
Create a new message when in another folder (Calendar, Contacts, Tasks)	**Ctrl + Shift + m**
Go to Inbox (if in Drafts, Sent, Archive, etc.)	**Ctrl + Shift + i**
Go to Outbox (if in Inbox, Sent, Archive, etc.)	**Ctrl + Shift + o**
Return to previous view	**Alt + Arrow Left**
When in the navigation pane, move up or down to desired folder	**Arrow Up or Arrow Down depending on the direction you want to navigate. Press space or enter to select the folder.**
Add a Custom Reminder Flag to your message	**Ctrl + Shift + g**
In an open message, move between the TO, Cc, Subject and the Message Body	**Use the TAB key**

Give them a try and see if you like the dehydrated food of shortcuts and what they can do for your productivity.

Stop the Deluge of Emails: Waterproof Outerwear

I hate being wet and cold, so waterproof outerwear is a must for my backpack.

With the strategies in this book, I have given you many ideas for waterproofing your day from a continuous deluge of emails. If you implement these ideas, they will become your waterproof outerwear. They will keep you warm and dry when the storms of your work day hit in the form of a deluge of requests in your Inbox.

Let's review your Waterproof Outerwear.

1. Pick the right **backpack** or tool.

2. Accept the fact that email is your **sturdy footwear** or the foundation of work communication.

3. Use **salve and Band-aids** from your first aid kit to heal your attitude about email. The Inbox is an easy access task list.

4. Follow the graph provided in this book because it is your **navigation system** for processing email.

5. Just as you **prevent sunburn**, prevent emails from entering your Inbox.

6. Use your '**binoculars'** and scan your Inbox before you start to process.

7. Remember proper email etiquette, so that you don't need a **repair kit**.

8. Just like a **knife** in your backpack cuts through the tough stuff, use click-and-drag techniques to put the tough stuff that enters your Inbox in the right place. If you can't do it right then, click on it and drag it to the Calendar or Tasks.

9. Make your Inbox column headings a **multi-tool knife**; customize them to show the exact information you need displayed.

10. Your **signaling equipment** in email is 'Inline Comments.' It draws the reader's attention to the location of your reply comments and directions.

11. Cultivating healthy work relationships is **hydration** for your work efforts.

12. Writing good subject lines provides **illumination** and encourages people to open, read, and act on your email requests.

13. Use person-to-person communication to avoid **setting a fire** with a negative email.

14. Learn to use the search functions and you'll stay tethered to your information just as a **nylon cord** is used as a safety tool to tether anything you want.

15. Voting buttons provide **insulation** from "Nobody asked me my opinion!" comments.

16. Just like **dehydrated food**, keyboard shortcuts are easy-to-use, while satisfying your need for speed.

Just like cozying down in your sleeping bag after a long day, cozy up to these features and then let me know how they have helped you survive the daily deluge of email.

One last thing you might want to include: insect repellant! Use these techniques and you won't be the insect that repels others away.

Join the Conversation

One of the miracles of this decade is the amazing amount of learning that can take place in conversations on the web. Join in the conversation in your choice of communication tools:

Twitter: @theoutlooklady

Website: http://www.TimeForResults.com

Email: mailto:Karla@karlabrandau.com