



# EMAIL INDEPENDENCE

## Reclaim the master key to your digital life

Your email address is the master key to your digital identity.

If you use Gmail through a browser, and Google begins requiring Digital ID to log in from 27 December 2025, that key is no longer fully yours.

This guide shows you how to:

- Safely **exit Gmail**
- **Keep every email** you've ever received
- Move to a **privacy-respecting provider**
- Cut the cord with Google **on your terms**

**No panic.** No tech wizardry required. Just calm, practical steps. Put aside 1-2 hours to work through all the steps.

## Overview: The three stages to email independence

1. **Secure your email history locally** (so nothing can be taken from you)
2. **Move to a privacy-friendly email provider**
3. **Delete Gmail safely** — without losing your emails

## STAGE 1: Secure your Gmail emails locally (before changing anything)

Before you touch Google, make your emails yours.

We used Thunderbird, a free, open-source desktop email program from Mozilla (the Firefox team).

Why Thunderbird?

- Emails are stored on your computer
- You control backups and archives
- Works with Gmail, ProtonMail, Tuta, Fastmail, and more
- No Big Tech lock-in

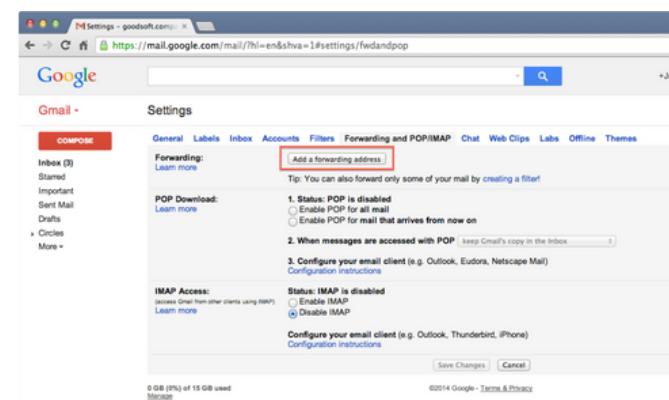
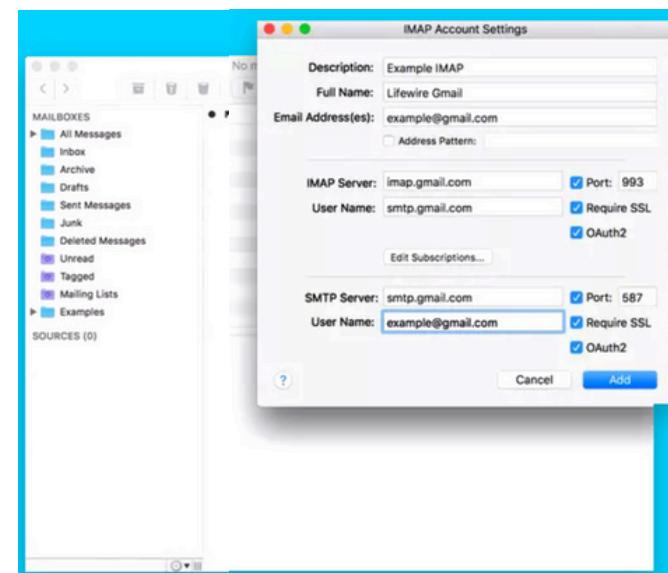
## Step 1: Install Thunderbird

1. Download Thunderbird from Mozilla
2. Install it like any normal app
3. Open Thunderbird

Thunderbird works like Outlook or Apple Mail — but with one crucial difference: your emails can live locally on your device, not only on someone else's servers.

## Step 2: Enable IMAP in Gmail

This allows Thunderbird to sync your Gmail folders.



1. Open Gmail
2. Click **Settings** (⚙) → **See all settings**
3. Go to **Forwarding & POP/IMAP**
4. Under **IMAP Access**, select **Enable IMAP**
5. Click **Save Changes**

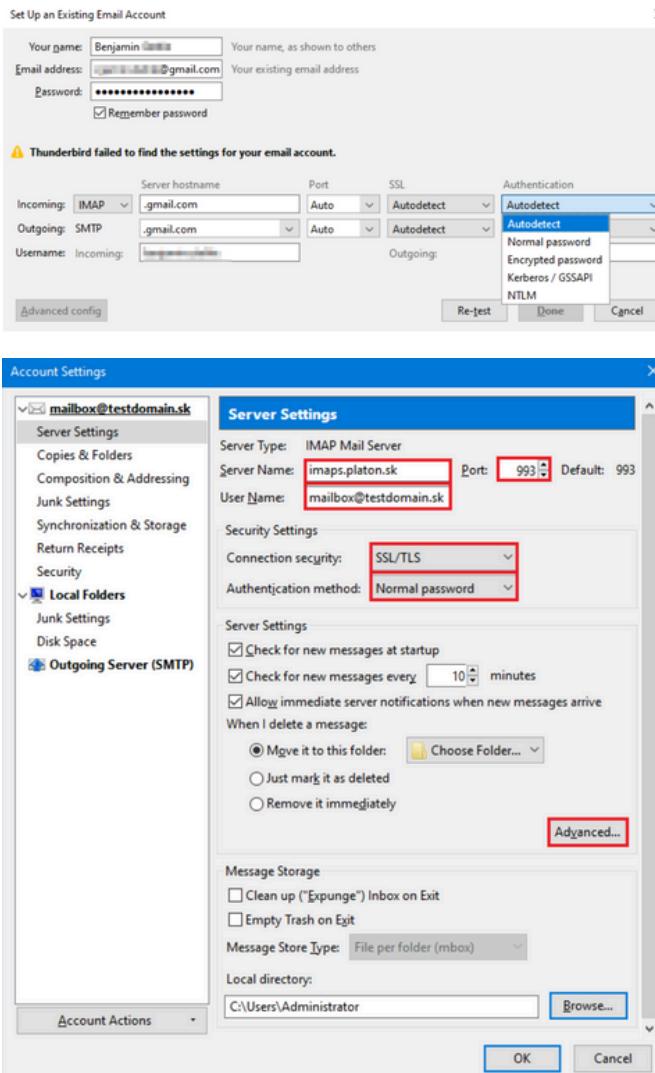


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### Step 3: Add Gmail to Thunderbird



1. Open Thunderbird
2. Go to **Account Settings** → **Add Mail Account**
3. Enter your Gmail address and password
4. Approve Google's permissions
5. Choose **IMAP**

Thunderbird will now download your emails.

#### Important:

If you have many years of email, this can take hours or days. Let it run quietly in the background.

### Step 4: Ensure emails are stored locally (critical)

Before deleting Gmail, confirm your emails are truly on your computer.

In Thunderbird:

1. Account Settings
2. Select your Gmail account
3. Go to Synchronization & Storage
4. Tick:
  - a.  Keep messages for this account on this computer
  - b. (Optional) Synchronize all messages locally

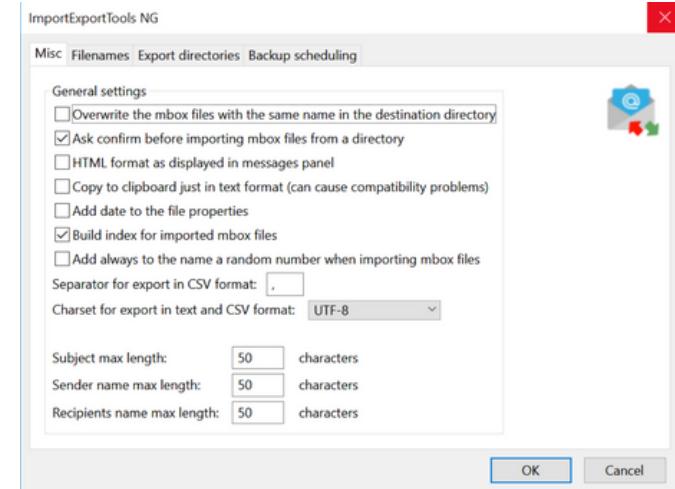
#### Tip:

Turn off Wi-Fi briefly. If you can still read your emails, they're safely local.

### Step 5: (Optional but recommended)

Export your email archive

Install **ImportExportTools NG** to create backups.



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- 1.Thunderbird → Tools → Add-ons & Themes
- 2.Search ImportExportTools NG
- 3.Install and restart Thunderbird
- 4.Right-click any folder → Export

Export formats:

- **.mbox** (entire folders)
- **.eml** (individual emails)

Store backups on:

- External hard drive
- Encrypted USB
- Offline storage

At this point:

- Your email history is safe
- Google can't lock you out of it
- You're ready to move on

### STAGE 2: to a privacy-friendly email provider

Recommended providers used widely in privacy-conscious communities:

- [ProtonMail](#) - easiest to migrate to; strong privacy
- [Tuta](#) - excellent privacy defaults
- [Fastmail](#) - Australian-based; reliable

This guide uses Proton Mail as the example.

#### Step 1 — Create your new email account

**Create your Proton Account**

One account for all Proton services.

Username  @proton.me

Password

Repeat password

**Create account**  

**Sign in**

By creating a Proton account, you agree to our [terms and conditions](#)

**ProtonMail**

**CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT**

Take back your privacy! Creating your secure email account takes less than 2 minutes.

**1 Username and domain**  
This will be your new ProtonMail email address.  
 @

**2 Password**

If you lose your password, you will not be able to read your emails.

**3 Recovery email (optional)**  
This is used to recover your account if you get locked out or forget your password.

By clicking Create Account, you agree to abide by ProtonMail's Terms and Conditions.

**CREATE ACCOUNT**

[Already have an account?](#)

**1. Go to [proton.me](#)**  
**2. Choose **Proton Mail****  
**3. Create your account**  
**4. Set a strong password**

You now have a working, independent email address.

**Step 2: Move your contacts from Gmail**

**Contacts**

**Export contacts**

Selected contacts (243)  
 Contacts (243)

**Export as**

Google CSV  
 Outlook CSV  
 vCard (for iOS Contacts)

**Cancel** **Export**

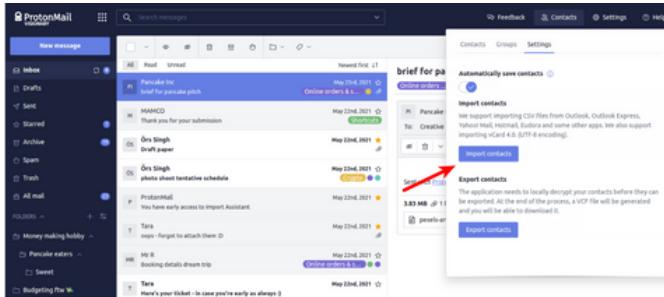


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### Step 2: Move your contacts from Gmail



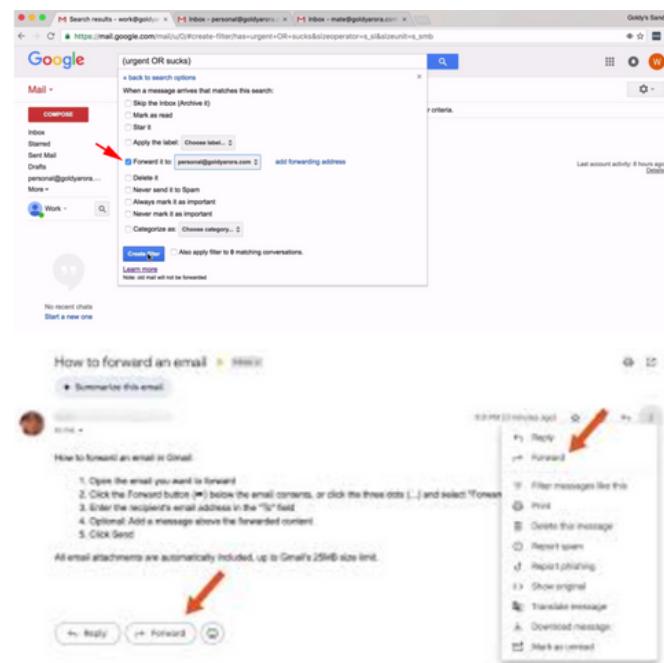
#### Export from Google

1. Go to [contacts.google.com](https://contacts.google.com)
2. Click **Export**
3. Choose **All Contacts**
4. Select **vCard**
5. Download the file

#### Import to Proton

1. Log in to Proton Mail
2. Click **Contacts**
3. Select **Import**
4. Upload the vCard file

### Step 3: Forward Gmail to your new address (transition phase)



1. Gmail → **Settings** → **See all settings**

2. **Forwarding & POP/IMAP**

3. Click **Add forwarding address**

4. Enter your Proton address

5. Confirm the code

6. Choose **Keep Gmail's copy** (for now)

This ensures you don't miss anything while transitioning.

### Step 4: Update your important accounts Do this gradually.

Start with:

- Banking
- Super / retirement
- MyGov / ATO
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Medical portals

Then:

- Social media
- Shopping
- Streaming
- Cloud services
- Newsletters & apps

#### Tip:

Search Gmail for:

**"verify" • "reset" • "receipt" • "subscription"**

### STAGE 3: Delete Gmail safely (without losing your emails)

This is where many people hesitate - but if you've completed Stage 1, you're safe.

The key principle

Deleting Gmail deletes Google's copy - not your Thunderbird archive.

#### Before deleting Gmail: quick checklist

- ✓ Emails fully downloaded in Thunderbird
- ✓ Offline reading works
- ✓ Optional backup completed



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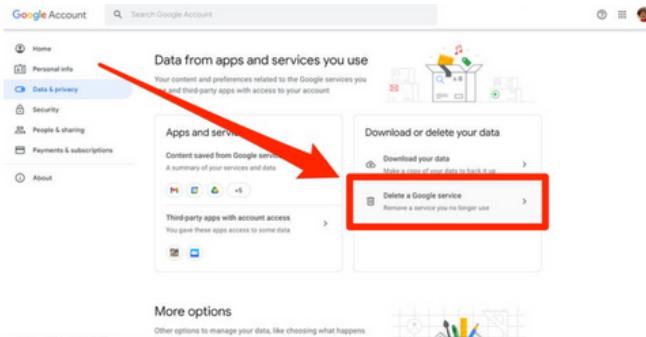
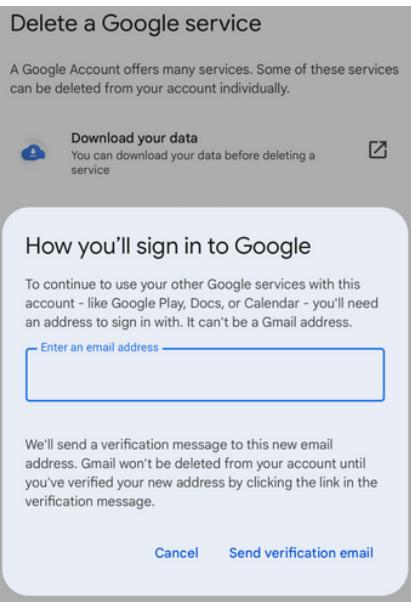
### Step 1: Remove Gmail access from Thunderbird (optional)

#### In Thunderbird:

- Account Settings → Remove Account

This does not delete local mail if it's already downloaded.

### Step 2: Delete Gmail from your Google account



1. Go to **Google Account**
2. Open **Data & Privacy**
3. Scroll to **Delete a Google service**
4. Select **Gmail**
5. Follow the prompts
6. Provide a non-Gmail recovery email

This:

- Deletes Gmail and your @gmail.com address
- Keeps other Google services (if you still use them)
- Leaves Thunderbird untouched

#### After deletion: what to expect

- Thunderbird stops syncing (expected)
- All emails remain readable and searchable
- You now control your archive permanently

#### Bonus step: Use aliases going forward

To avoid rebuilding a single “master key” problem:

#### Use email aliases

Services like **SimpleLogin** allow you to:

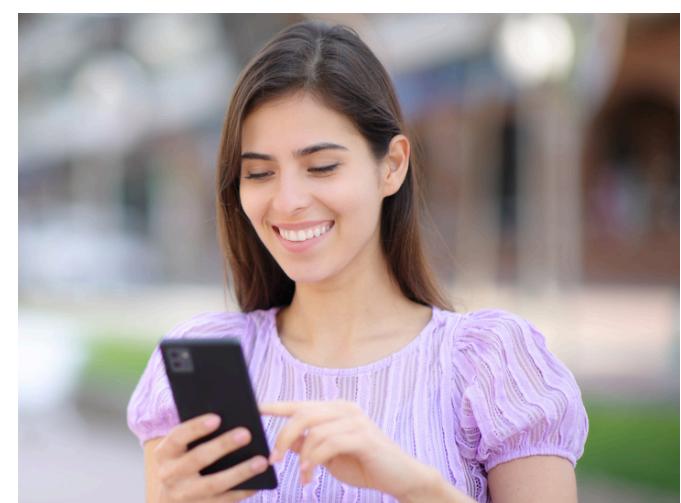
- Create unique addresses for every service
- Disable any alias that gets spammed
- Prevent cross-platform tracking
- Reduce account-linking and credential attacks

This is how you stay independent **long-term**.

#### Final reassurance

You don't need to disappear from the internet. You just need to **own your keys**.

Email independence is not extreme. It's sensible, and increasingly necessary.



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