

What to do when you exceed your Outlook/Exchange quota

This document explains briefly what happens when you exceed your Outlook/Exchange quota, and how to check what is using your quota, so that you can remove unwanted items.

About quotas and what happens when you reach them

First of all, Exchange sets three levels of quota, and it's only when you reach the last one that you can't receive any more mail. The three levels are:

1. **Warning:** Exchange will send you an e-mail telling you that your mailbox is almost full, and asking you to reduce your mailbox size.
2. **No send:** at the next level, you will be unable to send any messages, but you can still receive mail. Again, you will receive messages from Exchange telling you what is happening.
3. **No send or receive:** finally, as well as being unable to send messages, you will also be unable to receive them. Anyone trying to mail you will have their mail returned as 'undeliverable'. Exchange will send you messages saying that your account has been 'closed': this does **not** mean you can't log in and read or delete messages, it just means that you can't send or receive mail.

Checking where your quota is used (or 'but I've emptied my Inbox!')

It's easy to think that because you have nothing in your Inbox, you have emptied your account. Unfortunately, it's not quite as simple as that. As well as any folders you may have created yourself, perhaps to store important mail where you can find it quickly, Outlook may keep messages automatically in certain folders without telling you. The most important of these are:

- The 'Sent Items' folder: this is used to keep a copy of every message you send. If you send messages with attachments, this folder can quickly become very large.
- The 'Drafts' folder: this holds copies of messages that you start composing, but then stop work on before sending them. This can also become large if it contains messages with attachments.
- The 'Deleted Items' folder: this holds messages that you have deleted, and the important thing here is that these messages still count against your quota, until you empty the folder!

To check the size of a folder in Outlook

Right-click the folder, and choose 'Properties...' from the pop-up menu, then click 'Folder Size...' from the General tab. This will show you the size of the selected folder and any sub-folders it contains.

Note: this feature is not available in Outlook Web Access ('OWA' or 'web outlook'), so if you are using OWA you need to manually check the messages in each folder. Remember to look for messages with attachments as these are usually much larger than simple text messages.

You should do this for each of your folders until you find the one (or ones) with the most space used, and then you can choose which messages to remove in order to free up some space. Of course, deleting a few very large messages may be more effective than deleting a lot of small ones!

When you've done all this, don't forget to empty your 'Deleted Items folder'.

To do this, right-click it and select 'Empty Folder' from the pop-up menu.

Finally, please note there may be a short delay between deleting messages (and emptying your Deleted Items folder) and Exchange allowing you to send and receive messages again.