

What is Outlook Web App? A guide to Microsoft's web email service.

Written by [Dave Johnson](#)

Outlook Web Access (OWA) is a browser-based way to access your [Microsoft Outlook](#) email. While it's also been known as Outlook Web App, it's now more commonly referred to as Outlook on the web.

OWA once applied exclusively to the online version of Outlook which came with [Microsoft Exchange Server](#). These days, Outlook on the web is more commonly accessed from a [Microsoft 365](#) or free Outlook.com account.

While the version of Outlook that runs on your desktop as an app for [Windows](#) or [Mac](#) still gives you the most flexibility, power, and features, you don't need to use it — Microsoft makes it easy to open your Outlook inbox in a web browser instead. That means you can see your Outlook inbox from any computer.

How to open Outlook on the web

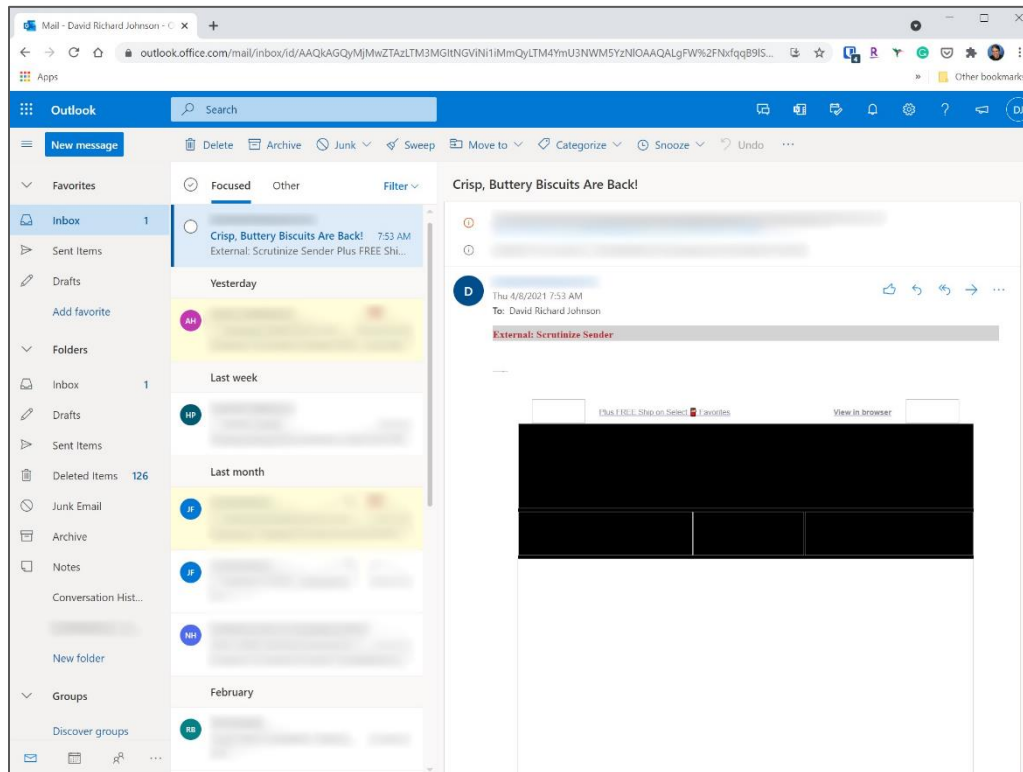
To open Outlook on the web, just open the URL that's associated with your Outlook account. Enter your email address and password and then select "Sign in."

If you do happen to be using an Exchange Server rather than a Microsoft 365 account, you might need to ask your network administrator for the URL to the OWA website for your account.

How to use Outlook on the web

While Outlook on the web is a simplified version of Outlook, you'll probably still recognize it as the email program you already know from the desktop. Here's how to find your way around:

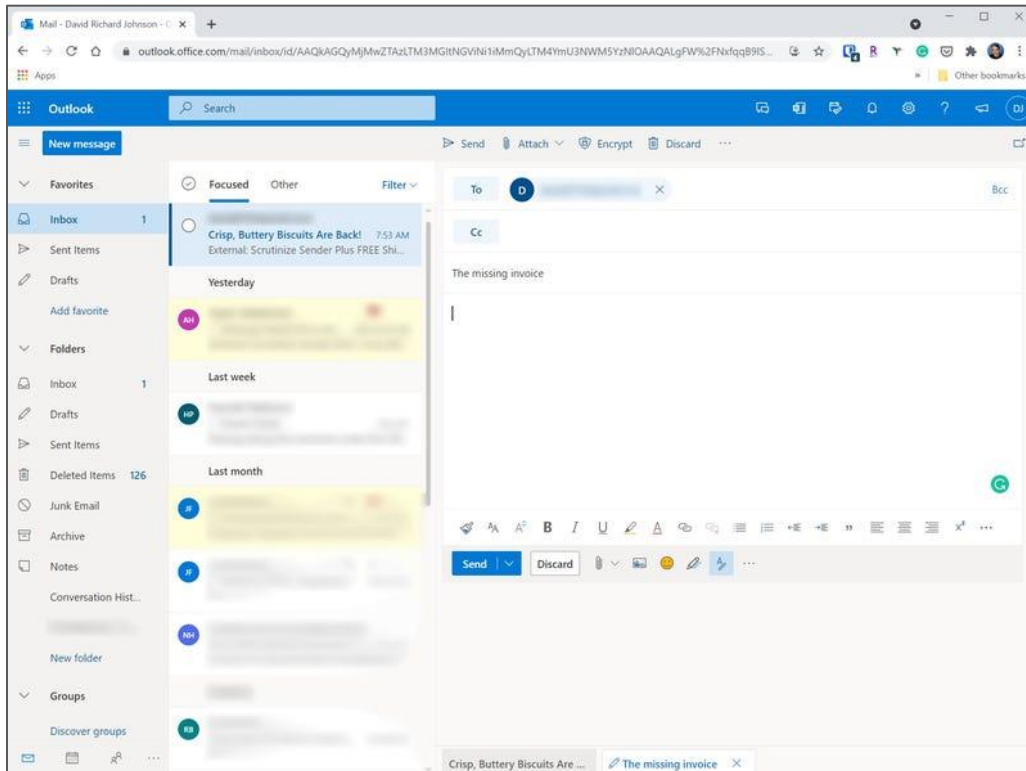
- At the far left of the browser window is the folder list. It includes your Inbox, Sent items, and all the usual folders you have access to in Outlook.
- To the right of the folder list is the message list. This displays all the messages in the currently selected folder, and the selected message appears in the Reading pane on the right.
- You can also access additional features and settings from the toolbar at the top of the page and switch among Outlook's modes (Inbox, Calendar, To Do, and Contacts) using the array of icons at the bottom left of the page, under the folder list.



How to compose a new message

1. Click "New message" at the top of the folder list.
2. Start typing the name of the addressee in the "To" field. Outlook will display a dropdown menu of complete email addresses. Select the name from the list when it appears, or finish typing the email address from scratch.
3. If you want to add a Cc or Bcc email, click it on the right side of the "To" field and fill in the email address.
4. Add a subject line and then enter the body of your email message.

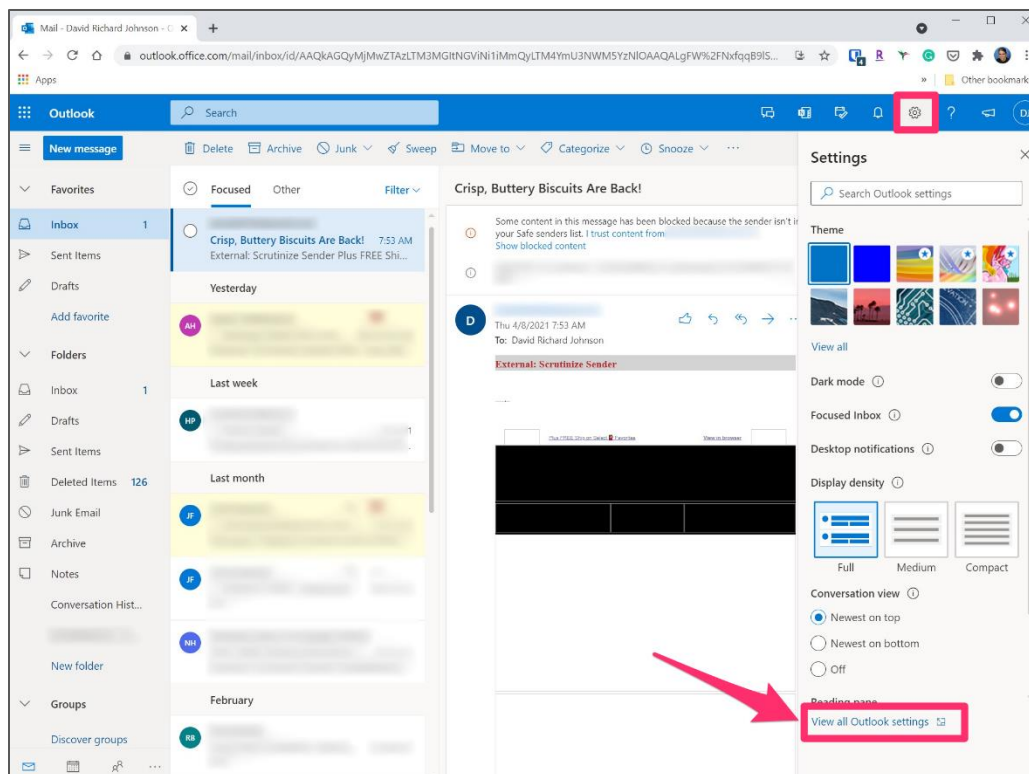
5. To add an attachment, click "Attach" in the toolbar above the message window and then choose where the attachment is located from the dropdown menu.
6. There are additional options available in the three-dot menu in the toolbar above the message window. Here you can save the message as a draft, add a signature, change the importance of the message, and more.
7. When you're done, click "Send."



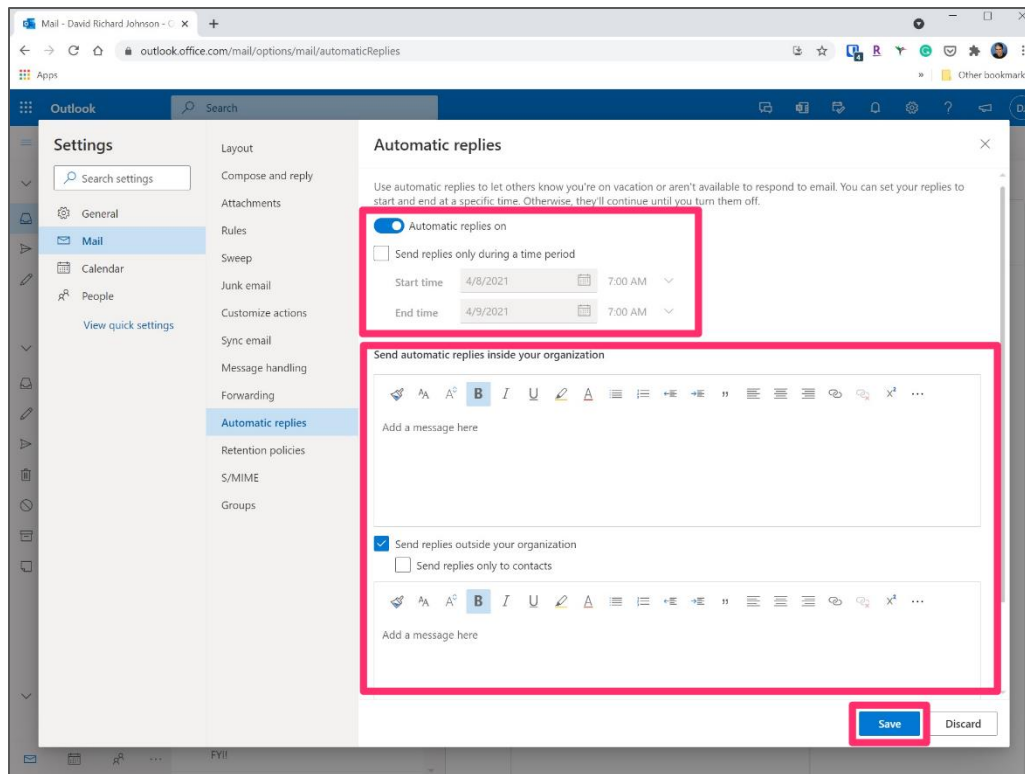
How to set an out of office message

You're probably used to setting an "out of office" message when you're on vacation or otherwise unable to respond to new emails. You can set up an out of office message from the web.

1. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and then, in the dropdown menu, click "View all Outlook settings."



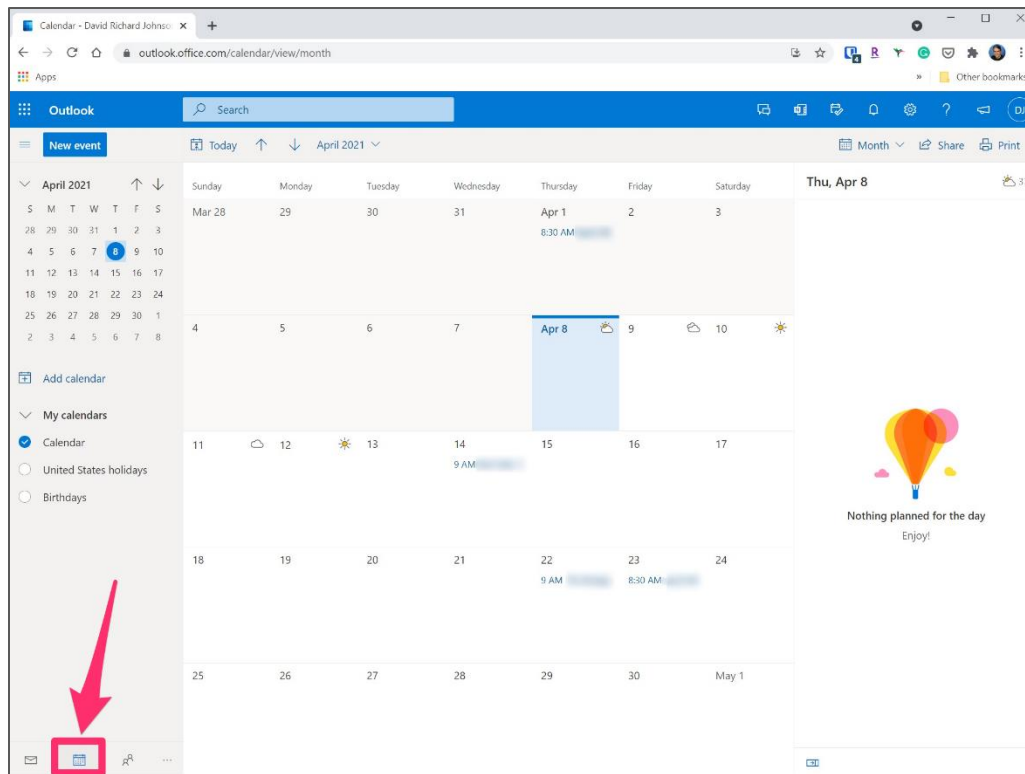
2. On the Settings page, make sure you're on the "Mail" tab at the far left.
3. Click "Automatic replies" in the middle pane.
4. Turn on automatic replies by swiping the button to the right. Then compose the message and set the time frame you'd like it to be active. Click "Save" when you're done.



How to view your Outlook calendar

To switch to the Outlook Calendar, just click the Calendar icon at the lower-left corner of the page. Here, you can customize the view. By default, you'll see the Month view, but click "Month" at the top-right and choose the view you prefer from the drop-down menu.

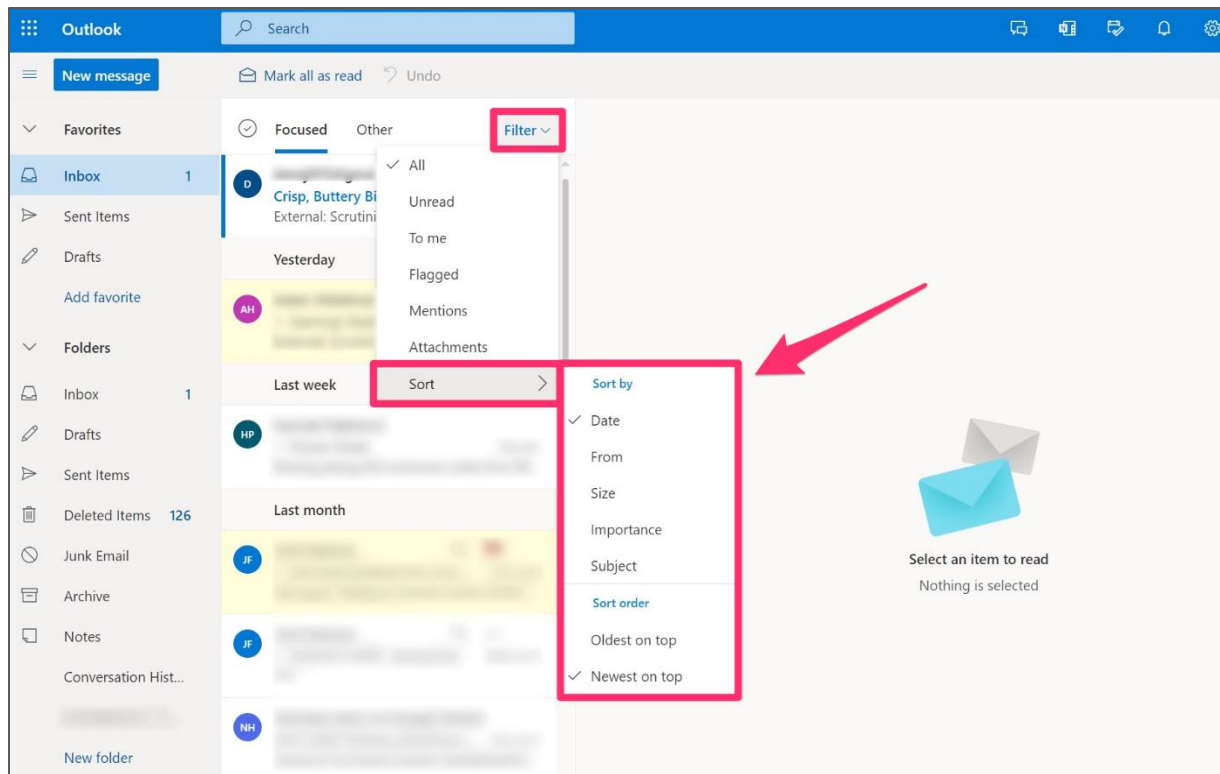
You can add events and appointments to your calendar using the "New event" button at the top-left of the page.



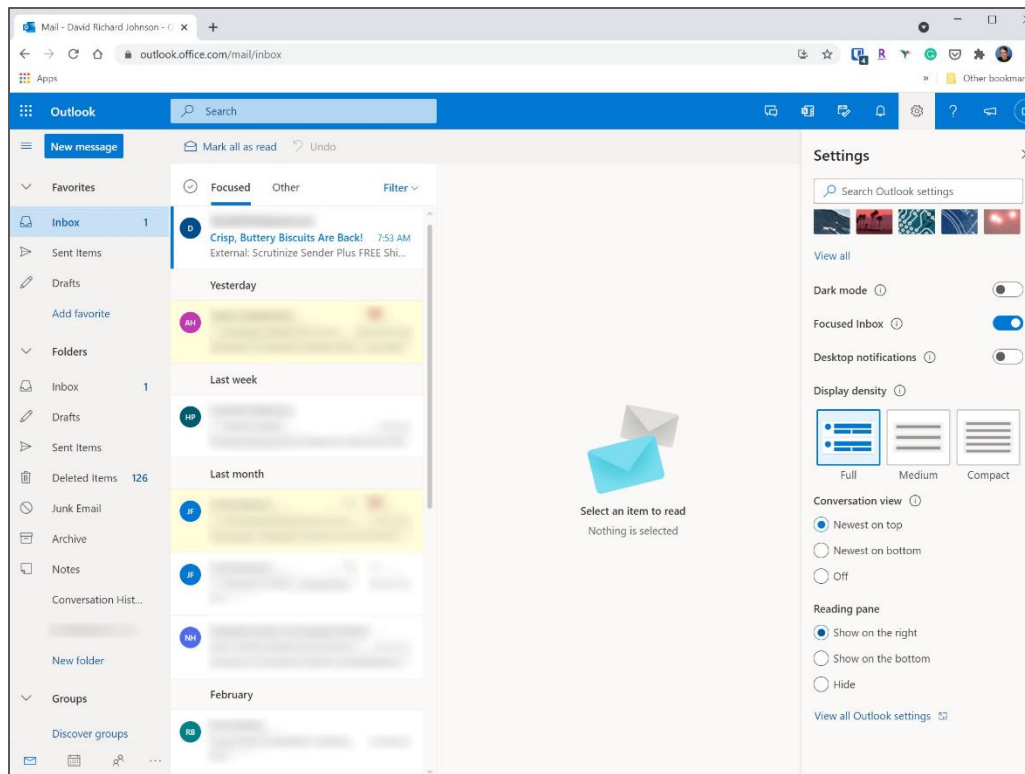
Additional Outlook Settings

While you can get up and running with Outlook on the web in minutes, there's a lot more power and customization hidden just under the surface. Here are some ways to get more out of Outlook on the web:

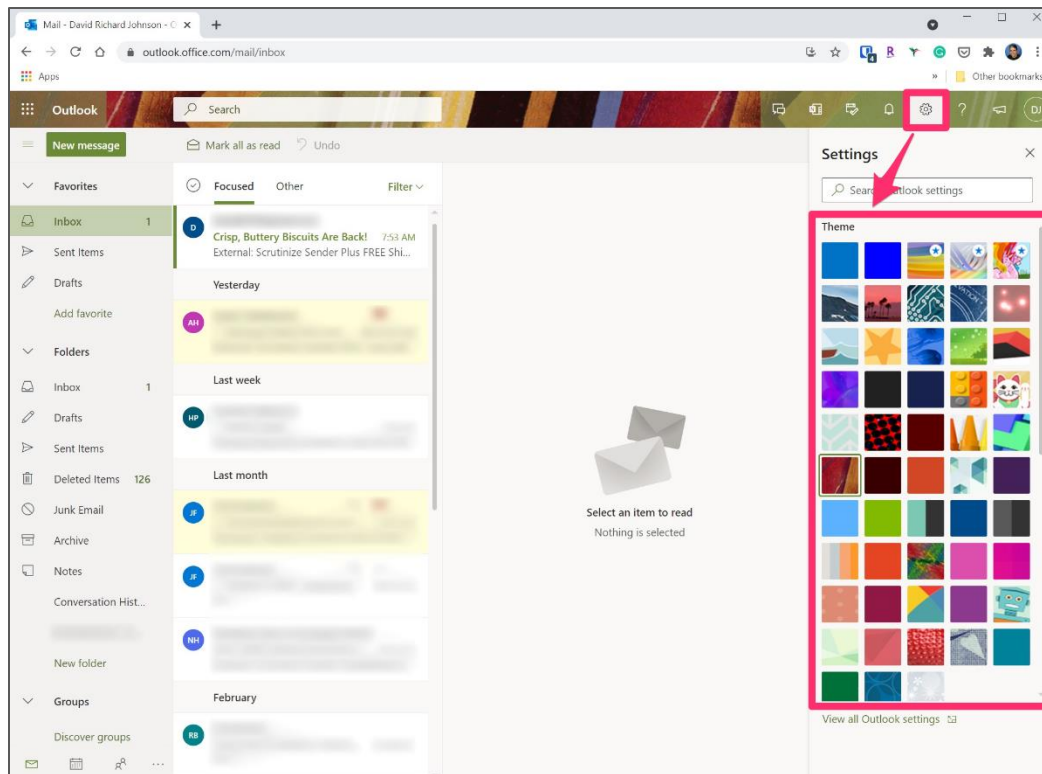
- **Filter your email.** You can control what email is displayed and how it's sorted. At the top right of the message pane click "Filter." In the dropdown menu, you can choose which messages you want to see — such as all messages, only unread, messages directly addressed to you, flagged messages, and so on. To change the sorting method, at the bottom of the dropdown menu choose "Sort" and select how you'd like the messages to be organized.



- **Configure the reading pane.** You can set the Reading pane to appear on the right of the message pane (which is the default), underneath the message pane, or you can even disable it entirely. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top-right of the page and, in the Reading pane section at the bottom of the page, choose "Show on the right," "Show on the bottom," or "Hide." If you choose to hide the pane, messages will appear in a new window and take over the Outlook webpage when you click on a message in the message list.

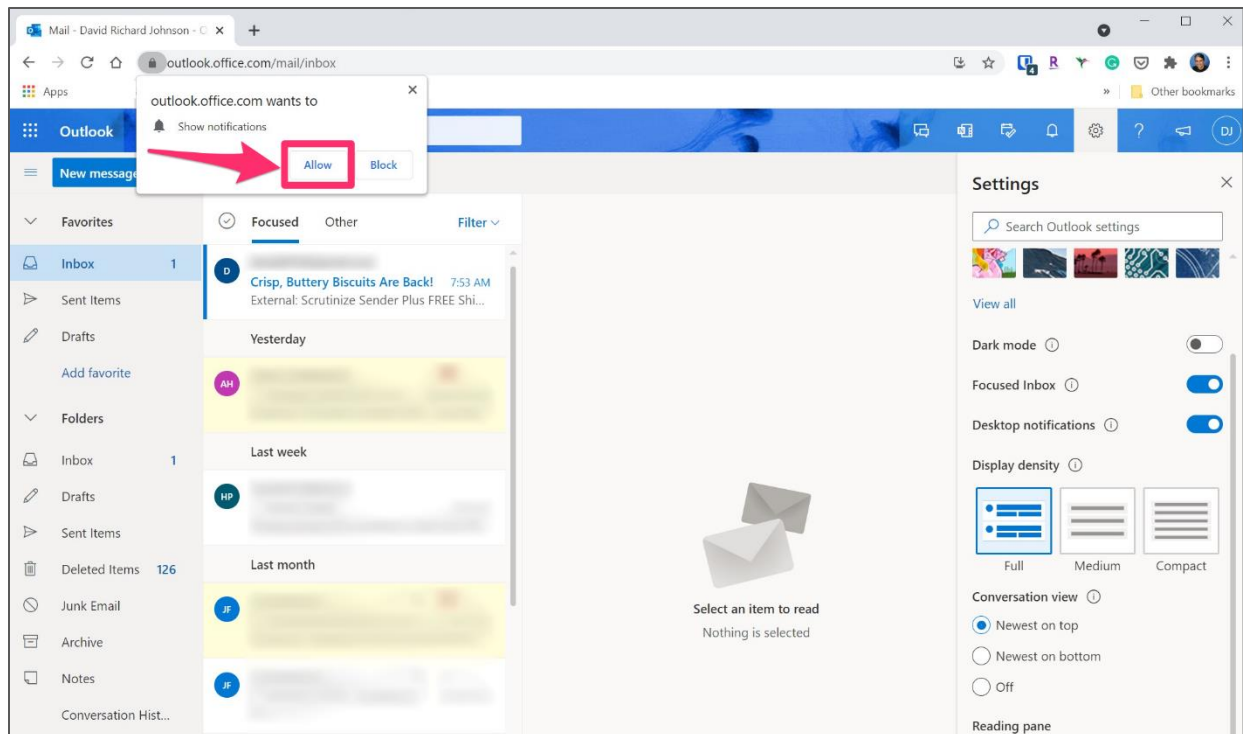


- **Change your theme.** Want a different theme for Outlook? Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and then choose a theme from the top of the Settings pane. There are more themes available than what you see here — click "View all" to see more.



Use the Settings icon to change the visual theme of Outlook on the web. Dave Johnson/Insider

- **Turn on dark mode.** Dark mode is a popular feature that some people find easier on the eyes, especially in the evening hours. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and then turn on Dark mode by swiping the button to the right.
- **Turn on desktop notifications.** If you'd like to see a pop-up notification about new messages even when your browser is not the focus of your desktop, you can turn on desktop notifications. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and then turn on Desktop notifications by swiping the button to the right. In most cases, you'll also need to enable your browser to show notifications — look for a pop-up from your browser to enable these notifications. If you're using Chrome, for example, click "Allow." In Firefox, click "Allow Notifications."



- **Customize display settings with display density.** You can vary how many messages appear in the message list at once — you can pack them in more tightly or space them out, making them easier to browse. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and find the Display density section. Choose "Full," "Medium," or "Compact." Full is the most relaxed view and each message includes a small icon representing the sender. Medium removes the icon, which shrinks the size of each message slightly. Compact tightens up the spacing and puts the most messages on the page at once.
- **View and group your conversations.** You might be familiar with Outlook's Conversation view from the desktop version of the email app. Conversation view groups related emails together, making it easier to follow a conversation thread. You can control this setting in Outlook on the web as well. Click the Settings icon (shaped like a gear) at the top right of the page and find the Conversation view section. You can arrange your email so the newest replies in a conversation appear on top, appear on the bottom, or you can turn off conversation view entirely. If you do that, every message appears independently in the message pane, regardless of its relationship to other messages.

Mail - David Richard Johnson - Outlook

outlook.office.com/mail/inbox

Outlook

New message

Mark all as read Undo

Favorites

- Inbox 1
- Sent Items
- Drafts
- Add favorite

Folders

- Inbox 1
- Drafts
- Sent Items
- Deleted Items 126
- Junk Email
- Archive
- Notes
- Conversation Hist...

Focused Other Filter

Crisp, Buttery Biscuits Are Back! 7:53 AM
External: Scrutinize Sender Plus FREE Shi...

Yesterday

Last week

Last month

Select an item to read
Nothing is selected

Settings

Search Outlook settings

View all

Dark mode

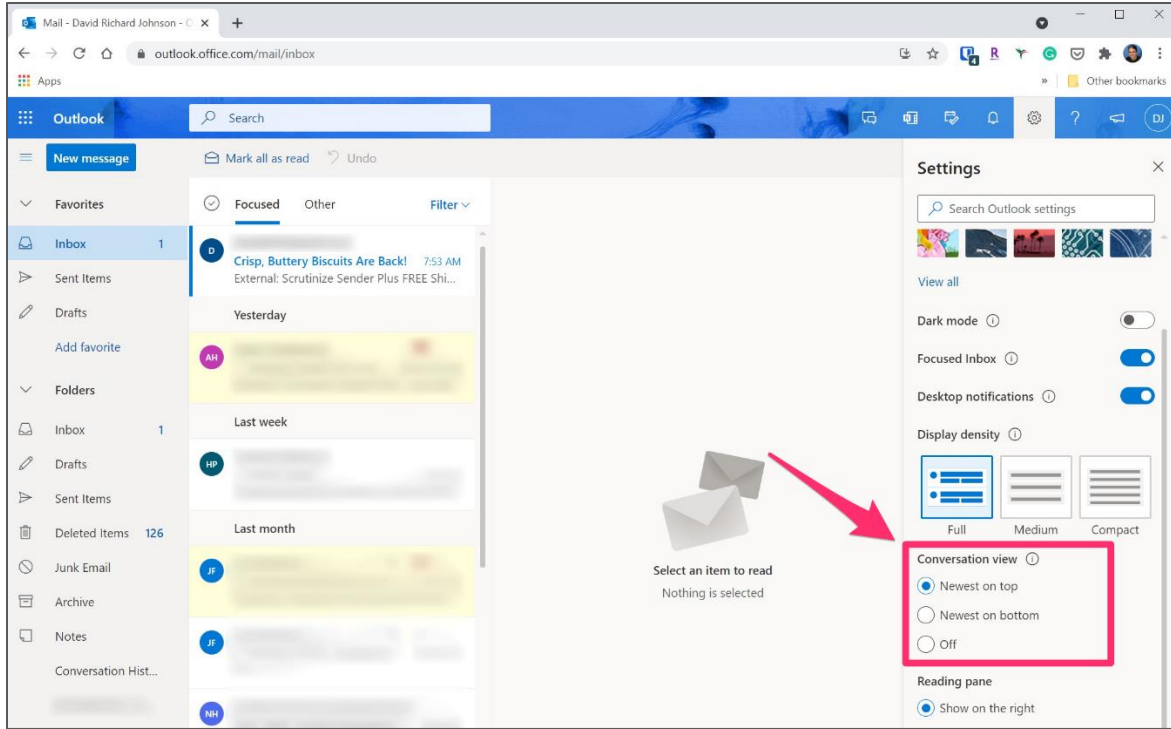
Focused Inbox

Desktop notifications

Display density Full Medium Compact

Conversation view Newest on top Newest on bottom Off

Reading pane Show on the right

The image is a screenshot of the Outlook web interface. On the left, there is a navigation pane with 'Favorites' and 'Folders' sections. The 'Inbox' folder is selected, showing a list of emails grouped by date (Yesterday, Last week, Last month). The top email is titled 'Crisp, Buttery Biscuits Are Back!'. In the center, there is a placeholder for a selected item with the text 'Select an item to read' and 'Nothing is selected'. On the right, the 'Settings' pane is open, showing various options. The 'Conversation view' section is highlighted with a red box, and a red arrow points from the placeholder text to this section. The 'Conversation view' is currently set to 'Newest on top'. Other settings like 'Dark mode', 'Focused Inbox', and 'Desktop notifications' are also visible.