

# How to Setup Gmail Over IMAP to Play Nice Within Mac OS X Mail

By: Stephen Hackett

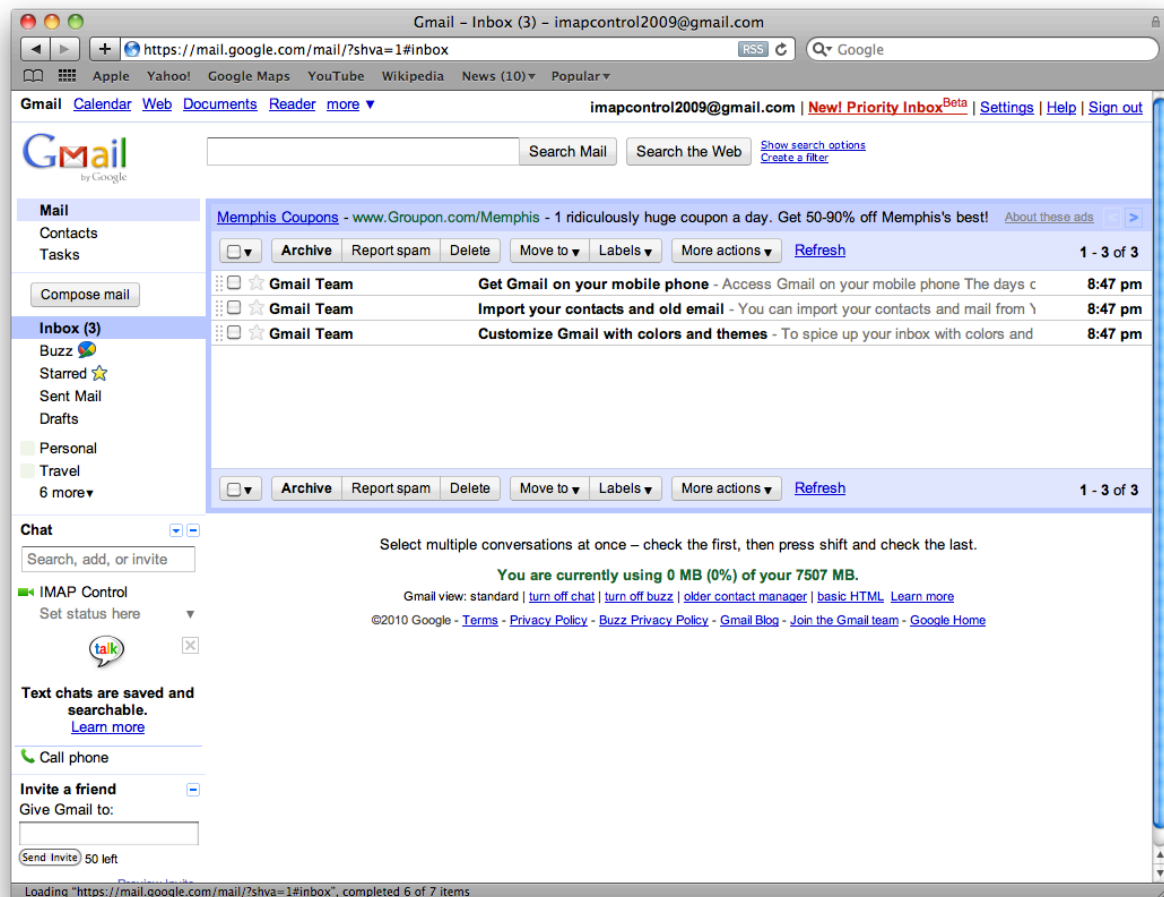
Updated: 10.13.2010 — Version 1.4 *[Added note about Gmail over Exchange in iOS. See last page.]*

So, you want to use Mac OS X Mail with Gmail, which is an excellent, free webmail service from Google? While the default setup is very easy, this tutorial will help smooth off the rough edges of Google's somewhat-wonky IMAP setup.

Please note this was written using Gmail in Fall 2010 and with a Mac running 10.6 Snow Leopard. Mail in older versions of OS X should behave the same way, however.

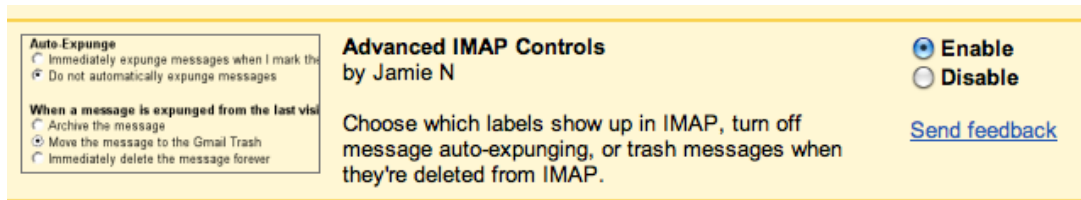
## Step 1: Setup a Gmail account.

This is an account setup just for this tutorial. Don't email me at it — no one checks this account. If you already have a Gmail account, this is bound to look familiar.

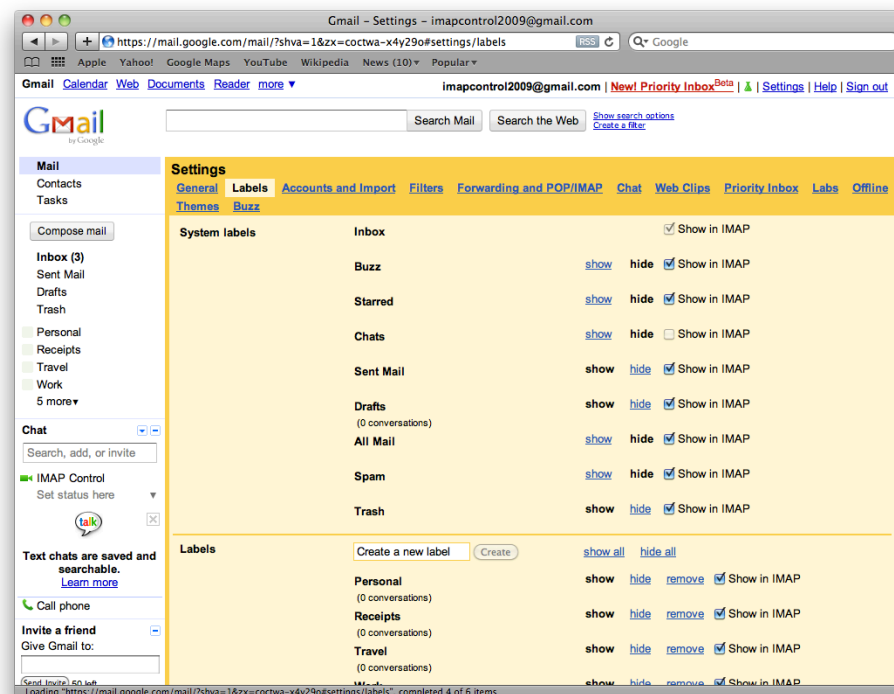


## Step 2: Turn on Advanced IMAP Control

1. Go to “Settings” at the top of the Gmail page, and select “Labs” from the available options. Find the lab feature titled “Advanced IMAP Controls,” turn it on, and scroll down and click save:



2. After you click save, the entire Gmail page will refresh. You can confirm this setting is active by going back into Settings and selecting “Labels.” There should now be a column titled “Show in IMAP” to the right of the labels, with a checkbox for each one:



## Step 3: Select Necessary Labels for IMAP Usage

By default, Gmail shows a lot of labels over IMAP that aren't needed for use in Mac OS X Mail. I recommend the following “System Labels” to be shown in IMAP:

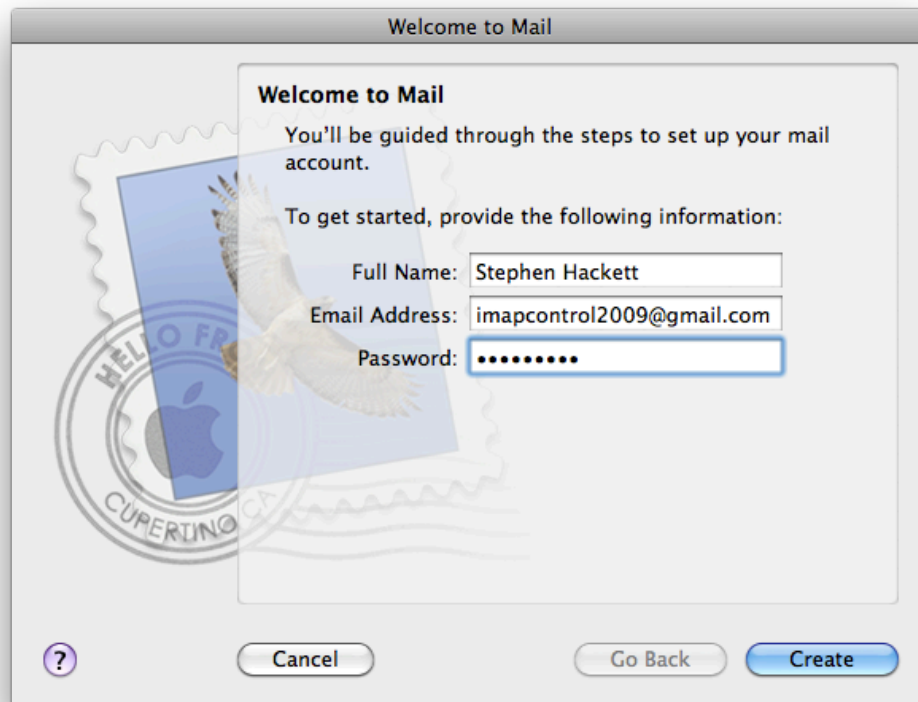
*Sent Mail, Drafts, Trash*

The non-system Labels below should all be checked for use in IMAP.

**+ NOTE:** If you want to see threads in Mac OS X Mail with in-coming and sent mail the way the Gmail website does, allow “All Mail” to be seen over IMAP. While I'm not a fan of this setup, you might be more in love with Gmail's web app than I am... (Thanks @macdoby!)

#### Step 4: Setup Mac OS X Mail

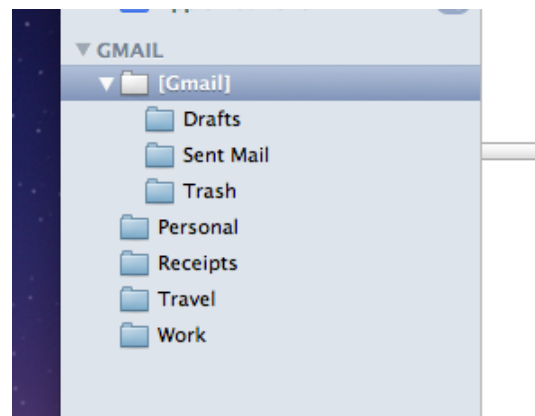
Launch Mail from the /Applications folder or from the Dock. If it is the first time Mail has been setup, or if this account is a new account, you will see the Account Setup screen. Fill in your Gmail account information and press “Create.”



If you are already using your Gmail account in Mail, you can piece together the settings you need to adjust from the rest of this tutorial or delete your account from the Mail's Account Preferences and start from scratch. Which is what I would do if I were you.

#### Step 5: Confirm Account Setup

When your Gmail account is setup, your folders will look something like this. Which is gross. Don't worry, we're going to kill that nasty [Gmail] folder thing here in just a second.

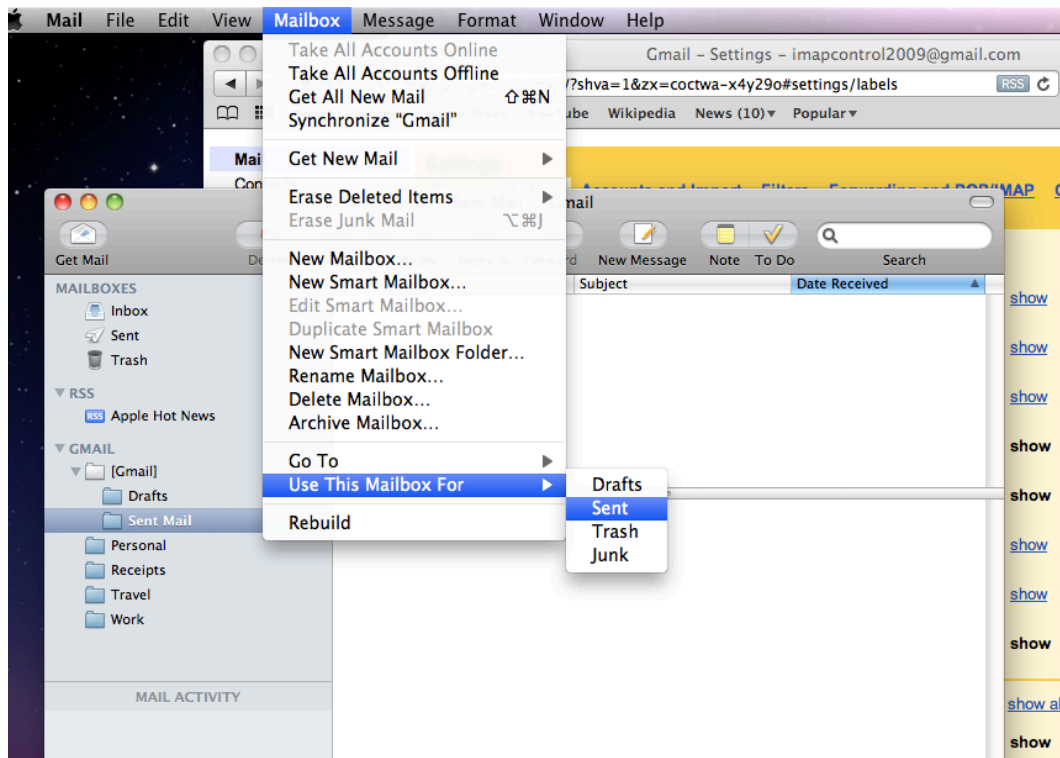


## 6. Mapping IMAP Folders Correctly

Under the [Gmail] folder, there are folders labeled “Drafts,” “Sent Mail,” and “Trash.” While you could use those to store those emails in them, life is a lot better if you can use the built-in folders up at the top of the screen in Mail.



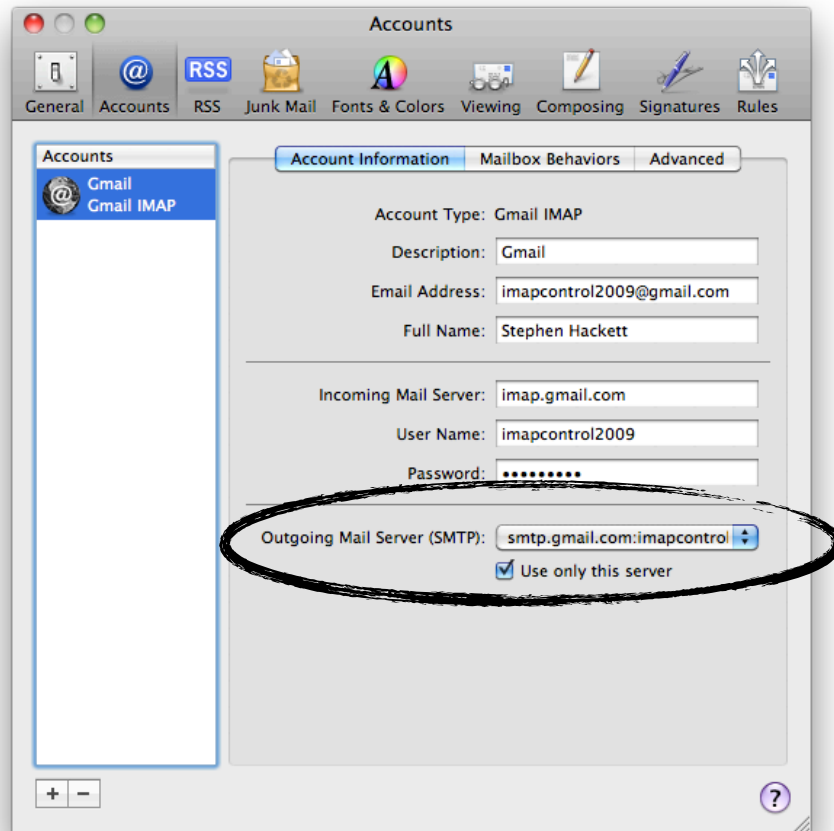
One-by-one, click on “Drafts,” “Sent Mail,” and “Trash” under [Gmail], go up to the Mailbox menu at the top of screen, and assign the correct usage:



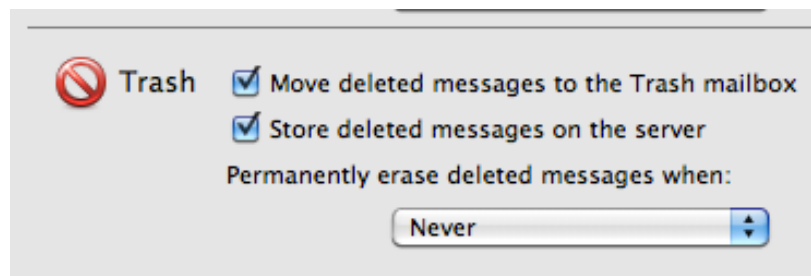
As you re-assign these folders, they should disappear from underneath the [Gmail] heading.

## 7. Setting Proper Account Settings

Once you've mapped your special folders correctly, go to the Mail menu at the top of the screen and go to "Settings." Under the "Accounts" tab, make sure this account is setup to only use its assigned SMTP server:

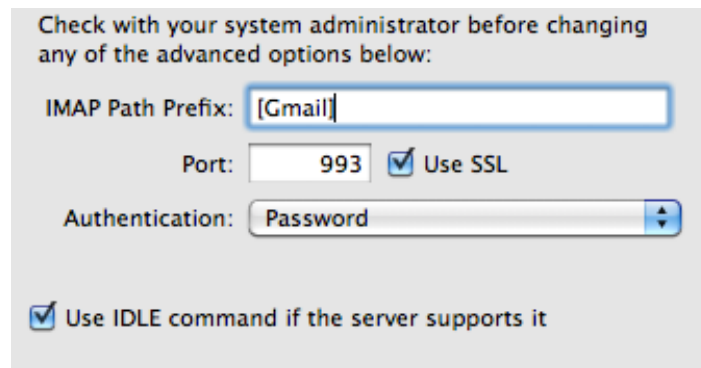
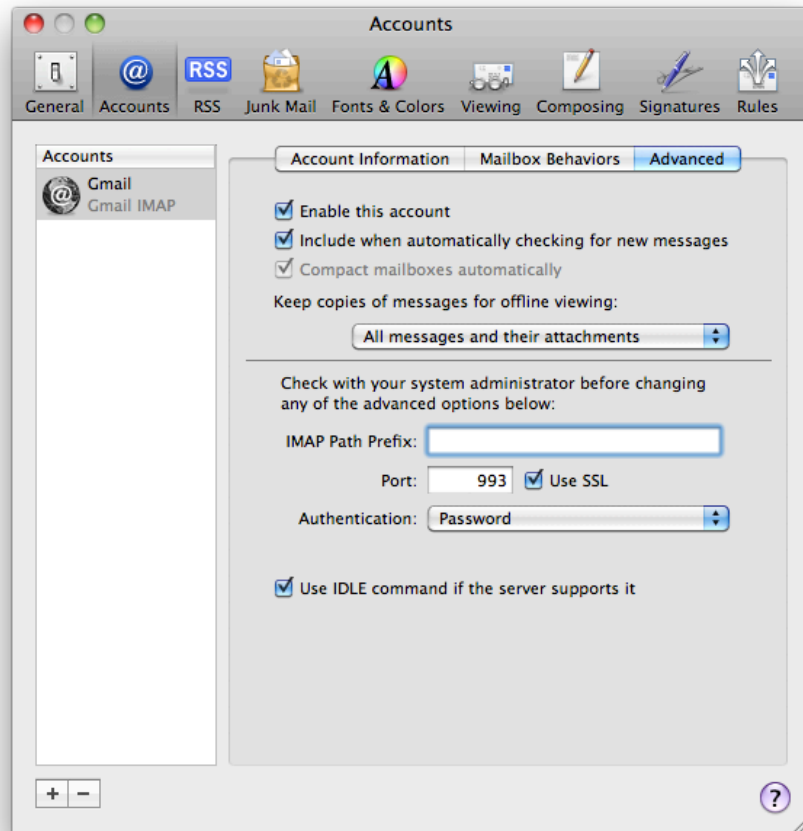


Under the "Mailbox Behaviors" tab, uncheck the option to store Junk mail on the server. Gmail's junk filtering is very good — if you think something got caught that shouldn't have, you can always go online and check. Also be sure to adjust the setting allowing Mail to delete the trash. You're using Gmail — there's no need to delete anything.



## 8. The Dreaded [Gmail] Folder

The moment you've been waiting for here is finally here. Under the Account settings, go to the "Advanced" tab and set [Gmail] as the IMAP Path Prefix:



Once you set this, close the preferences window, saving your changes.

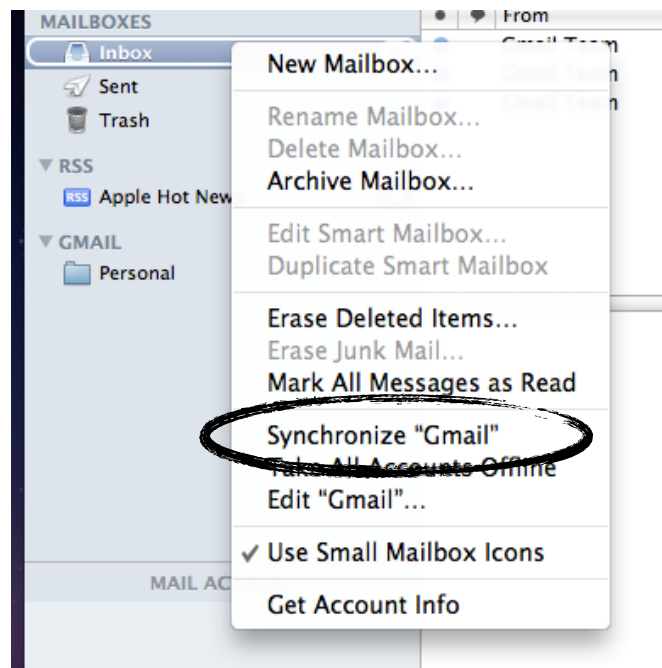
## 9. Telling Gmail that [Gmail] is gone.

After Step 8, your folders disappeared on the left side of Mail. Never fear — the labels aren't gone, Gmail just doesn't know where they went. To fix this, go back to Gmail in your web browser, go to Settings and then to Labels. In the bottom part of the screen, Google lists your personalized labels. To get them back into Mail in Mac OS X, simply add "[Gmail]/" to the name of each label:

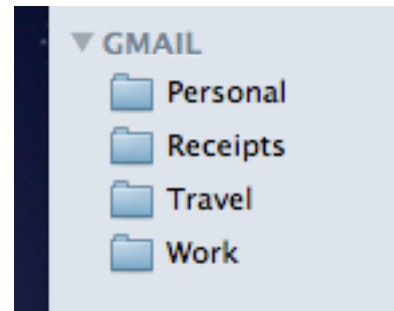


## 10. Synchronize Gmail via IMAP

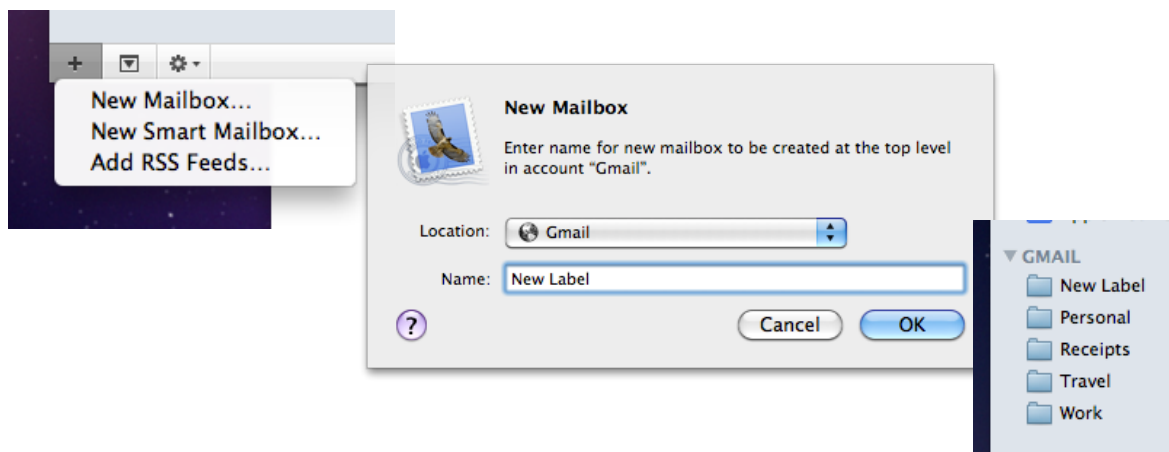
Once you've renamed all of your labels, right-click on your Gmail inbox in mail and select "Synchronize Gmail." You can also do this from the "Mailboxes" menu at the top of the screen:



Once this is complete, your labels will show up as well-behaved folders in Mail's sidebar. Without that pesky [Gmail] folder hanging around making you nervous.



+ **Note 1:** To add additional folders, you can use Mail's built-in feature:



If you add Folders this way, they will show up in Gmail next time you refresh Mail.

+ **Note 2:** If you add new labels online, be sure to include the "[Gmail]/" prefix so they show up in Mail.

+ **Note 3:** You can use the Labels settings in Gmail to hide or show certain labels in your sidebar when you check your email through your web browser. Please note that the "[Gmail]/" prefix will always show on the online version of Gmail, even though Mail shows the folders correctly.





**+ Note 4:** If you use Gmail over Exchange on an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch, these changes may make your folders do strange things in MobileMail.app. At this time, Gmail-over-Exchange doesn't honor custom folder pre-fixes 100%, creating some weird issues. If you see this, simply setup Gmail over IMAP on your IMAP device, using [Gmail] as the folder prefix:

