



MENU



What happens to my email address when I switch provider?

David Swan, 16 July 2014 (last updated)

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"I'm switching broadband provider but my current supplier provides my email address - what will I need to do to switch email addresses? Will I still be able to use the old one?"



Keeping emails is a tricky business.

The general rule is that providers leave email accounts alone when you switch but, better safe than sorry, it's often worth backing up and moving to your new ISP's service or to free webmail.

Although there's plenty of anecdotal evidence that it can be just fine to use a previous provider's address for months and years after switching ISPs are under no obligation to keep those accounts open.

Switching and emails: the rules

Let's look at the policies of the big providers.

ISP	Can I keep my email?
BT Mail	Yes, for £1.60 a month. Otherwise email access will be lost after 30 days.
Sky Yahoo! Mail	Yes.
TalkTalk Webmail	Yes.
Virgin Media Mail	No, email will be deleted after 90 days.

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Plusnet email	Yes, for £20 a year. Otherwise email access will be lost.
EE email	Yes, but not webmail.

Here's some more detail about these policies.

BT: email@btinternet.com or email@btopenworld.com

According to [BT's help centre](#), when you cancel your BT broadband subscription your free BT email account will only be available for 30 days, after which BT will delete the account.

However, you can sign up for BT Mail Premium, a paid email service, to continue to access the BT account, even when signed up to another ISP, without the worry that you might lose access to your account at any moment.

Note that you will have to sign up before your BT account is deleted.

At the time of writing the service is priced at £1.60 a month. See [BT's page on this](#) for more information.

Sky: email@sky.com

You're in luck! Sky offer what they call 'email for life'.

It's just a webmail service, actually it's operated by Yahoo! as of Spring 2014, but we like that Sky really emphasise that their customers can keep their email addresses even after changing ISP.

More on email

[Staying safe with email](#)

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TalkTalk: email@talktalk.net

TalkTalk also offer webmail which remains accessible even after customers have moved to another ISP.

However, when you cancel your TalkTalk account you lose access to your control panel, so you may not be able to make changes to your email account, such as changing the password, which seems a bit worrying to us.

Note that all TalkTalk email accounts will become inactive if they aren't used for 90 consecutive days.

Inactivity just puts the account 'to sleep', though. It doesn't delete it but the address will stop receiving emails.

So if users log in again after 90 days the account will again become active

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Virgin Media: email@virginmedia.com

Virgin Media's policy is just about the exact opposite.

They give former customers three months to change all their account details across the web and then clear out old email addresses, removing personal data and even, potentially, recycling the address (see below).

Plusnet: email@username.plus.com

When a Plusnet account is closed access to all account features - including email - will be removed. See [Plusnet's general cancellation policy here](#) .

However, you can keep your email by requesting a downgrade to Plusnet's email only package, which is £20 for a year, during the cancellation process.

You must request this option when you cancel: after the account's gone it's too late.

EE: mail@yourname.orangehome.co.uk/@fsmail.net

Orange used to allow former customers to continue to access email through third party software like Outlook even after they left the provider, but not through webmail.

As with TalkTalk, this seems worrisome, because if things go wrong there's much less support.

Free and multiple accounts

All in all, then, some ISPs have great policies on email but many are asking former customers to just cross their fingers and hope that their email will keep working.

If you do go for this option, switching to an email service such as Outlook, Thunderbird or Mailbird ([see our review here](#)) which allows you to send multiple accounts to one inbox could be well worth doing just to make doubly sure that you don't lose all your messages and contacts or as a way of phasing in a new account from your new broadband provider.

Here are some brief instructions on setting up multiple accounts in Microsoft Outlook in Windows:

- On the 'Tools' menu click 'Email Accounts'.
- Select View or change existing email accounts and then click Next.
- Click the email account you want to modify and then click Change.
- Make sure that the settings you see match the information you received

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- Click Test Account Settings to verify that your account is working. If there is missing or incorrect information, such as your password, you will be prompted to supply or correct it.
- In the Microsoft Windows Control Panel, double click the Mail icon, and then click Show Profiles. Click the profile you want, click Properties, and then click Email Accounts.

Using Outlook on a Mac the procedure is very similar. Go to 'preferences' then 'accounts' and enter the information from your ISP.

This will give you access to both your email accounts in Outlook.

It's also worth being aware of some of the free online email accounts that are currently available, especially if you plan on moving your broadband providers frequently in the future.

You might find that a Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo! email account will have just as many useful features as Outlook plus the added bonus of being able to back everything up to webspace.

Recycling email addresses

There's another issue concerning some moving email accounts: provider email recycling.

Yes, even now one of your old email addresses is probably being used by a silver surfer in the home counties who's already ordered a set of William and Kate commemorative plates with it.

It's Virgin Media, in particular, who have come under scrutiny for the practice. It's concerning since a customer with a recycled address would be able to sign into websites the former customer used, access password retrieval and subsequently take over the account.

Consumer and privacy groups think that in order to preserve privacy and prevent conflicts old email addresses should be consigned to the dustbin of broadband history.

However, Virgin Media says it waits six months before any possible reallocation.

The Government's Information Commissioner added nothing to the debate by saying that, "The [Data Protection] Act requires that personal information should be kept secure and processed fairly."

The best advice, it seems, is to change all important website logins which use your old email address since your broadband provider won't help you with