Import and Export Emails in Microsoft Outlook (Windows & macOS)

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Microsoft Outlook is a cornerstone of professional email communication worldwide. Whether you're switching computers, backing up your messages, or consolidating multiple inboxes, importing and exporting your email data is essential.

This guide covers both **Windows and macOS** versions of Outlook, including **Outlook 2016, 2019, 2021, and Outlook for Microsoft 365**.

Why Import and Export Outlook Emails?

1. **Backup and Recovery**: Safeguard important emails, contacts, and calendar entries by creating a local copy.
2. **Migration**: Easily move your Outlook data from one computer (or operating system) to another.
3. **Consolidation**: Merge older archives or multiple PST/OLM files into a single Outlook profile.
4. **Organization**: Keep your mailbox tidy by archiving older emails and reducing your primary mailbox size.

Key Differences: Windows vs. macOS

- **File Format**:
  - **Windows**: Uses **.pst** (Personal Storage Table) files for email, contacts, and calendar data.
  - **macOS**: Primarily uses **.olm** (Outlook for Mac Archive File) for exporting and importing.
- **Importing PST on Mac**: Outlook for Mac can import .pst files created on Windows, but the feature requires manual selection of the PST option in the import wizard.

- **User Interface**: The menus and step names may vary slightly. However, the core concepts of importing and exporting remain similar across versions.

Part 1: Exporting Emails in Outlook (Windows)

The following steps apply to Outlook 2016, 2019, 2021, and Outlook for Microsoft 365 on **Windows**.

Step 1: Open the Import and Export Wizard

1. **Launch Outlook** on your Windows PC and ensure you're in the profile you want to export from.
2. Click on the **File** tab at the top-left corner.
3. From the left sidebar, select **Open & Export**.
4. Click **Import/Export** to open the wizard.

Step 2: Choose Export Options

1. In the wizard, select **Export to a file** and click **Next**.
2. Choose **Outlook Data File (.pst)** and click **Next** again.

Step 3: Select Folders to Export

1. Choose the mailbox folders you want to export (e.g., Inbox, Sent Items, etc.).
2. **Include Subfolders** if you need all nested folders.
3. Click **Next**.

Step 4: Specify the Export File Location

1. Click **Browse** to select where you want to save the .pst file.
2. Give the file a descriptive name (e.g., "OutlookBackup_2025.pst").
3. Choose how you want to handle duplicates (commonly "Replace duplicates with items exported").
4. Click **Finish**.

Step 5: Optional Password Protection

1. If desired, set a password for your .pst file. This ensures that only those with the password can open it.
2. Click **OK**.

Note: The export duration depends on the size of your mailbox. Larger mailboxes will take longer to export.

Part 2: Importing Emails in Outlook (Windows)

Step 1: Access the Wizard Again

1. In Outlook, click **File → Open & Export → Import/Export**.

Step 2: Select the Import Option

1. Choose **Import from another program or file** and click **Next**.
2. Select **Outlook Data File (.pst)** and click **Next**.

Step 3: Locate the PST File

1. Click **Browse** to find the .pst file you wish to import.
2. Decide how to handle duplicates.
3. Click **Next**.

Step 4: Choose the Destination

1. Select the folder (or entire mailbox) where you want the imported data to go.
2. **Include Subfolders** as needed.
3. Opt to **Import items into the same folder** in your main account or select a different Outlook profile.
4. Click **Finish**.

Step 5: Finalizing the Import

1. If the .pst is password-protected, enter the password.
2. Outlook will import your data. The time varies by file size.

Part 3: Exporting Emails in Outlook (macOS)

These steps apply to Outlook for Mac (2016, 2019, 2021, or Microsoft 365).

Step 1: Launch Outlook for Mac

1. Open Outlook on your Mac and make sure you're in the profile you want to export from.

Step 2: Access the Export Function

1. In the top menu bar, click **File**.
2. Select **Export…**. (In some older Outlook for Mac versions, you may need to go to **Tools** > **Export** .)

Step 3: Select What to Export

1. **Items of These Types**: Typically, you'll choose "Mail," but you can also include "Contacts," "Calendar," "Tasks," and "Notes."
2. Click **Continue**.

Step 4: Choose the Save Location and Name

1. Outlook will create an **.olm** file.
2. Choose a folder on your Mac to save it.
3. Give it a descriptive name (e.g., "MacOutlookBackup_2025.olm").

Step 5: Finish Export

1. Click **Save**.
2. Wait for the export to complete. The time depends on mailbox size.

Part 4: Importing Emails in Outlook (macOS)

Step 1: Go to the Import Wizard

1. In Outlook for Mac, click **File** → **Import…**.

Step 2: Select the File Type

1. In the dialog box, select **Outlook for Mac archive file (.olm) or Outlook Data File (.pst)** (if you're importing a PST from Windows).
2. Click **Continue**.

Step 3: Locate Your File

1. Navigate to where your .olm (or .pst) file is saved.
2. Select the file and click **Import** (or **Continue**).

Step 4: Wait for the Import to Finish

1. Outlook will import the data. The duration depends on the file's size.
2. Once completed, a message will confirm the import.
3. You'll find the imported mail under **On My Computer** or in the designated folder structure within Outlook for Mac.

Additional Tips & Common Issues

- **File Size Constraints**:
  - Older Windows Outlook versions (pre-2003) have a 2GB limit on .pst files. Modern Outlook versions can handle .pst files up to 50GB.
  - Outlook for Mac also handles large files, but performance may slow down significantly with extremely large .olm or .pst files.
- **Archiving**:
  - Use Outlook's AutoArchive (Windows) or scheduling features (Mac) to keep your active mailbox lean and store older emails in archived files.

- **Inbox Repair Tool**:
  - For Windows PST corruption, use **SCANPST.exe** (installed with Outlook) to repair the file.
- **Network Locations**:
  - Avoid importing/exporting directly to network drives or cloud-sync folders (e.g., OneDrive, Dropbox). Copy the file locally first to prevent corruption.
- **Cross-Platform Migrations**:
  - If you're moving from Windows to Mac, export your data into a .pst file on Windows and then import that .pst file on Mac using the "Import" wizard.
  - Conversely, if you have an .olm file, note that the Windows version of Outlook cannot directly import .olm files. You'd need to import them first into Mac Outlook, sync to an Exchange or IMAP account, and then download onto Windows Outlook if needed.