

Vision Tech

Email & online accounts **Handbook**

29 free step-by-step guides in plain English

Free to print and share.

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Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

I cannot sign in to my email

Not being able to sign in to your email is worrying, but it is usually a typing slip, an old saved password or a locked account. Take it slowly and avoid guessing repeatedly, as that can lock you out.

Quick fixes to try first

- Check **Caps Lock** is off and that the email address is spelled correctly, including the part after the @.
- Use the eye icon, if there is one, to see what you are typing.
- Check you have the right provider. Gmail, Outlook, iCloud and BT each have their own sign-in page.
- Try a different device or browser, or a private window, in case saved details are wrong.

Step by step

1. Type the website address yourself, such as the provider's name into a search or the browser's address bar. Do not use a link from an email or text.
2. Choose **Forgot password** or **Can't access your account**.
3. Follow the steps, which usually send a code to your phone or recovery email. Check your spam folder if it does not arrive.
4. Choose a new password that you have not used before.
5. Update your saved password on your phone, tablet and mail apps, otherwise they may keep trying the old one and lock you out again.

If your account is locked

Wait before retrying. Providers often lock accounts for a while after several failed attempts, and repeated attempts make it worse.

Be alert for scams

Messages saying your mailbox is full or your account is suspended, with a link to sign in, are often scams. Forward them to report@phishing.gov.uk. Report Fraud (reportfraud.police.uk, 0300 123 2040) takes reports too, or Police Scotland on 101 in Scotland.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if you no longer have access to your recovery phone or email, the account says it is disabled, you suspect someone else has changed your password, or you work through the steps and still cannot get in. Tell us the provider and any message you see.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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Microsoft 365 sign-in problems

Trouble signing in to Microsoft 365 is common and usually fixable. It might be a typed password, an old saved sign-in, or a security prompt. Please be careful to use only official Microsoft sign-in pages.

Check the basics

1. Look at the address bar. Sign-in pages should be on a Microsoft address such as microsoft.com or office.com. If you arrived by a link in an email, do not enter your password. Type the address yourself.
2. Check your email address. Work or school accounts and personal Microsoft accounts are different, and the same email can sometimes be used for both.
3. Turn off Caps Lock and type your password carefully.
4. Check the date and time on your device.

Forgotten password

Choose **Forgot password** on the sign-in page and follow Microsoft's steps. If it is a work account, your organisation's administrator may need to reset it for you. Do not use websites that offer to recover passwords for a fee.

Stuck on an old account

If Office keeps signing in with the wrong account, try a private or incognito window to test. In Office apps, look under **File** then **Account** to see which account is signed in and whether you can switch.

Security prompts

If you are asked to approve a sign-in on your phone and you did not try to sign in, say no. Change your password straight away.

Browser trouble

- Try another browser.
- Clear cache and cookies (see our guide).
- Turn off any extensions that might block sign-in, one at a time.

Locked out

Microsoft may lock an account after suspicious activity. Follow the official recovery steps on the sign-in page. Never give your codes to someone who calls or messages you.

When to get more help

Contact us if you cannot get past two-step verification, if you lost the phone you use for codes, if your work account has been disabled, or if you think someone else has signed in as you.

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Password managers: the basics

A password manager remembers all your passwords for you, so you only have to remember one strong password. It can also create long, random passwords and fill them in when you sign in. Used well, it is much safer than reusing the same password everywhere.

How it works

Your passwords are kept in an encrypted store, called a vault. You unlock it with a main password, often along with a fingerprint, face scan or a code. The manager then fills in details on websites and apps.

Choosing one

- Pick a well-known, well-reviewed manager from a reputable company.
- Install it only from the official website or your device's app store.
- Avoid unknown free tools and browser add-ons with few reviews.

Setting it up

1. Install the app or browser extension.
2. Create your main password. Make it long and unique, such as three or four unrelated words, and never use it anywhere else.
3. Write the main password down and keep it somewhere safe at home, away from the computer.
4. Turn on two-step sign-in for the manager, if offered.
5. Save the recovery information the manager gives you.

Moving your passwords in

Start with the most important accounts: email, banking and shopping. Let the manager save passwords as you sign in. Change weak or repeated passwords gradually, one at a time, and keep the old one until the new one works.

Good habits

- Never share your main password.
- Do not store the vault's recovery codes in your email.
- Check the web address before the manager fills in a password. If it does not offer to fill in, you may be on a fake site.

Please be careful

If you forget the main password and have no recovery option, you may lose access to the vault. Do not delete the old password list until you have checked the new one.

When to get more help

Contact us if you want help moving over from a notebook or a browser, if you have forgotten your main password, or if you are worried a password may have been exposed.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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What to do with old accounts you cannot get into

Most of us have old email or online accounts we have forgotten. Some may still contain photos, contacts or links to other services. Do not worry. There are safe, official ways to try to get back in, and there are things to avoid.

Make a list

Write down the accounts you remember, the email address used for each, and any phone number it might be linked to. Check old emails and your browser's saved passwords for clues, as they may show where you have accounts.

Use only official recovery

- Go to the provider's own website, typed in yourself, and choose **Forgot password** or **Need help signing in**.
- Follow the steps. You may be asked to confirm a code sent to a backup email or phone number.
- Be patient. Providers can take time and may ask for details such as when you created the account.
- Do not use websites, social media posts or phone numbers that promise to "recover" accounts for a fee. These are scams.
- Never give your codes or password to anyone, even if they say they are from the provider.

If you cannot recover it

Some accounts cannot be recovered, especially if you no longer have the backup details. That is a security feature. Do not try to guess passwords repeatedly, as that can lock the account for longer.

Closing an account

If you do get in, first save anything you want to keep, such as photos, contacts and emails. Closing or deleting an account is usually permanent. Also check what else uses it to sign in, such as shopping sites or apps. Check the provider's official instructions for closing it.

If you cannot get in

Leave it alone. Accounts that are unused may be deleted by the provider after a long period. Make sure no important services depend on it, and change the contact email on any account that does.

When to get more help

Contact us if the old account is linked to your business or bank, if you believe it has been taken over, or if you want help working out which accounts still matter.

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My email storage is full

Most free email accounts have limited space, which is often shared with photos and files. When it is full, you may stop receiving new emails. The fix is usually to clear out large or old messages, carefully.

Quick fixes to try first

- Check how much space you are using. In Gmail, scroll to the bottom of the inbox, or look in Google One. Other providers show it in **Settings** or **Storage**.
- Remember that Google's storage is shared between Gmail, Drive and Google Photos.
- Look for the biggest messages, which usually have attachments such as photos and videos.

Step by step

1. In Gmail, type **has:attachment larger:10M** into the search box to find large emails. In Outlook and other providers, look for a sort or filter by size, if available.
2. Open some of the biggest ones. Save any attachments you want to keep, such as photos or documents, to your computer first.
3. Delete the emails you no longer need.
4. Empty the **Trash** or **Deleted items** folder, and the **Spam** or **Junk** folder. Warning: this deletes messages for good, so look through first.
5. Unsubscribe from newsletters that you no longer read, using the genuine **Unsubscribe** link in ones you recognise.

Be careful

- Do not delete emails you may need, such as receipts, bank letters and tickets, until you have saved them.
- Messages that say your mailbox is full and ask you to click a link are often scams. Check your storage by signing in the usual way.
- Buying more storage from your provider through your account settings is safe, but never in response to an email.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if your mailbox is still full after clearing, you are not sure what is safe to delete, mail is bouncing, or you cannot open the account to clear it. Tell us your provider and how much space it says you are using.

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How to stop spam emails

Spam is unwanted email, from adverts to scams. You cannot stop it entirely, but you can reduce it a lot and keep it from hiding the messages that matter.

Quick fixes to try first

- Mark junk as spam using the **Report spam** or **Junk** button in your email. This trains the filter.
- Do not open or reply to spam. A reply shows the sender your address is real.
- Do not click links or open attachments in messages you did not expect.

Step by step

1. Select the unwanted message and choose **Report spam**, **Junk** or **Mark as junk** in your email app or website.
2. For ordinary newsletters from firms you recognise and once signed up to, open the email and use **Unsubscribe**. This is usually at the bottom.
3. For messages from unknown senders, do not click **Unsubscribe**. Mark as spam instead.
4. Use **Block sender** where your email offers it. Scammers often use many addresses, so blocking is only partly effective.
5. Check your spam folder now and then, in case a genuine message was sent there. Mark it as **Not spam** if so.

Reduce spam in future

- Keep one email address for important things such as banking, and another for shopping and sign-ups.
- Avoid putting your address on public websites and social media.
- Take care with ticking boxes that allow marketing.

Scam emails

If an email looks like a scam, forward it to report@phishing.gov.uk. If you lost money or gave details, contact your bank and report to Report Fraud at reportfraud.police.uk or on 0300 123 2040. In Scotland, call Police Scotland on 101.

When to get more help

Stop and ask for help if you receive many emails that appear to come from you, get lots of password reset emails you did not request, or have clicked something and are worried. Tell us your provider and what the emails look like.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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Outlook will not open or is stuck on loading profile

When Outlook sits on "Loading profile" or will not open at all, the cause is often a small fault that a few simple steps can clear. Please work through them gently and in order.

Menu wording varies between versions of Windows and Office, so use the nearest match.

Step 1: Wait and restart

Give Outlook a couple of minutes, as large mailboxes can be slow. If nothing changes, restart the computer and try again.

Step 2: Check your internet

Open a web page to make sure you are online. Outlook cannot load a work or online account without a connection.

Step 3: Close any hidden copy of Outlook

1. Press **Ctrl + Shift + Esc** to open **Task Manager**.
2. Look for **Outlook** in the list.
3. Select it and click **End task**.
4. Open Outlook again.

Step 4: Try Safe Mode

Hold down the **Ctrl** key while clicking the Outlook icon. If asked whether to start in Safe Mode, choose **Yes**. If it opens, a faulty add-in may be the cause. In Outlook, look under **File** then **Options** then **Add-ins** to see what is installed, but do not remove anything you do not recognise.

Step 5: Install updates

Open any Office app, then look under **File** then **Account** for **Update Options** and **Update Now**.

Step 6: Try the repair tool

In Windows **Settings**, go to **Apps** and find **Microsoft 365** or **Office**. Choose **Modify** and then **Quick Repair**. Your emails stay in your account, but please check with us first if your email is stored only on this computer (a POP account or a local data file).

Please do not

- Delete the Outlook profile or data files unless an expert has confirmed your mail is safely stored online. Deleting them can lose emails.
- Reinstall Office without checking your licence details.

When to get more help

Contact us if Outlook still will not start after a repair, if it says a data file is corrupt, or if you are not sure where your email is stored.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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Outlook is not receiving or sending emails

If emails have stopped arriving or are stuck in your Outbox, the problem is usually a connection, a full mailbox or a setting. These checks will find most causes.

Menu names can differ between Outlook versions, so use the closest wording.

Check the basics

- Are you online? Open a web page to confirm.
- Look at the bottom of Outlook for wording such as **Working Offline** or **Disconnected**.
- Look for a message asking you to sign in again.

Turn off Work Offline

1. Click the **Send / Receive** tab.
2. If **Work Offline** is highlighted, click it once to switch it off.
3. Click **Send/Receive All Folders**.

Check your webmail

Sign in to your email on the provider's website, such as outlook.office.com or mail.google.com. If new mail is there but not in Outlook, the issue is with Outlook. If it is not there either, the sender may have mistyped your address, or the message may be in **Junk** or **Spam**.

Stuck in the Outbox

An email stuck in the **Outbox** often has a very large attachment, or Outlook has lost its connection. Open the message, remove the attachment if it is big, and send again. Keep a copy of the attachment first. Do not delete the email if you have not saved your text.

Check your storage

A full mailbox cannot receive new mail. Look in your account settings or on the webmail site for how much space is used.

Restart and update

Close Outlook fully, restart the computer, and open Outlook again. Then check for updates under **File** then **Office Account**.

Passwords

If your password was changed recently, Outlook may need the new one. Sign in when prompted.

When to get more help

Contact us if only one account has stopped working, if you see an error code you do not understand, if messages are being refused, or if you suspect your account has been accessed by someone else.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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Why are my emails going to junk, and how to mark them as not junk

Email filters sometimes put genuine messages in Junk (also called Spam) by mistake. You can teach your email to trust the right senders. Take care, though, as most junk mail really is unwanted or unsafe.

Menu names vary between providers and versions.

First, check before you trust

Before moving a message, ask yourself:

- Do I know this sender?
- Was I expecting this message?
- Does it ask for money, passwords or urgent action?

If you are unsure, do not click links or open attachments. Leave it in Junk.

In Outlook

1. Open your **Junk Email** folder.
2. Click the message once.
3. Look for **Not Junk** (or **Report** and then **Not Junk**) on the toolbar.
4. Choose to move it back to your inbox.

In Gmail

1. Open **Spam** from the menu on the left (you may need to click **More**).
2. Open the message.
3. Click **Report not spam**.

On a phone

In most mail apps, open the message, tap the three dots or the folder icon, and choose to move it to the **Inbox**. Some apps also offer **Not Spam**.

Making it stick

Marking a message as not junk helps, and you can also add the sender to your contacts or a safe senders list. In Outlook, look for **Junk** then **Junk E-mail Options** then **Safe Senders**. Only add people and companies you genuinely know.

Check your Junk folder now and then

Look in it once a week for things like invoices or booking confirmations. Junk folders are usually emptied automatically after a period, so do not leave anything important there.

Do not delete in a hurry

Before emptying Junk, glance down the list in case a real message is hiding there. Emptying it cannot be undone.

When to get more help

Contact us if lots of genuine messages from your own organisation keep going to Junk, if you are being flooded with spam, or if you think someone is sending messages pretending to be you.

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Why did my email bounce back? How to read the error

When an email bounces, you get an automatic reply, often titled "Undeliverable" or "Delivery Status Notification". It looks scary, but it usually tells you exactly what went wrong if you read it carefully.

Look for the plain-English line

Near the top of the bounce message there is usually a sentence explaining the problem. Ignore the long strings of technical text at first and look for words such as "address not found", "mailbox full" or "message too large".

Common causes and what to do

- **Address not found or does not exist:** The address is probably mistyped, or the person has left. Check the spelling, including dots and the part after the @ sign. Ask the person to confirm their address another way, such as by phone.
- **Mailbox full:** Their inbox has no space. Try again later or contact them another way.
- **Message too large:** The attachments are too big. Use a sharing link instead. See our guide on attachments that are too large.
- **Blocked or rejected as spam:** The receiver's system did not trust the message. Avoid very short messages with only links, and ask the person to check their junk folder and to add you as a safe sender.
- **Temporary problem or delayed:** Sometimes the message is still trying. You will usually be told it will keep retrying. Wait before sending again.

What to try

1. Re-read the address you typed, or find an earlier message from that person and reply to it.
2. Resend the email.
3. Try a shorter message without attachments, as a test.
4. If it bounces again, copy the exact wording of the error somewhere safe.

A warning

If you get a bounce for an email you never sent, someone may be pretending to be you. Do not click links in the bounce. Change your password using the provider's official sign-in page and turn on two-step sign-in.

When to get more help

Contact us if the error mentions words such as "SPF", "blocked" or "blacklisted", if business emails keep bouncing to the same domain, or if you see bounces for emails you did not send. Please send us a screenshot of the full error.

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What to do when an email attachment is too large

Most email providers limit attachments to a modest size, often somewhere around 20 to 25 MB in total. Photos, videos and presentations can easily go over. The limit also applies to the person receiving your email, so it may be their limit that stops you.

Option 1: Share a link instead

This is usually the best choice. Upload the file to a cloud service such as OneDrive or Google Drive, then send a link.

1. Upload the file to your cloud storage.
2. Right-click it (or tap the three dots) and choose **Share** or **Get link**.
3. Choose who can see it. Prefer named people over "anyone with the link".
4. Paste the link into your email.

Outlook and Gmail may also offer to turn a big attachment into a link automatically. Look out for a message or option when you attach it.

Option 2: Make the file smaller

- For photos, choose a smaller size when your phone or email app asks.
- For Word or PowerPoint files, look for compress picture options in the **Picture Format** tools. Menus vary by version.
- For several files, send them in separate emails.
- Zipping files can help a little, but photos and videos barely shrink.

Option 3: Use a transfer service

Some well-known services let you send big files without an account. Only use one you trust, and avoid sharing sensitive information through them.

Be careful with private files

Anything containing bank details, health information or passwords should not be sent through open links. Ask the receiver which method they prefer.

Do not delete the original

Keep the original file until you have confirmed the other person has received it.

When to get more help

Contact us if your cloud storage is full, if links are not opening for the person you are sending to, or if your business needs a safe way to send large files regularly.

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How to set up your email on an iPhone

Adding your email to an iPhone only takes a few minutes. Most common providers, such as Gmail, Outlook.com and iCloud, set themselves up with just your address and password.

Menu names change between iOS versions, so if something looks different on your phone, look for the closest wording.

Before you start

- Make sure you know your email address and password.
- If you use two-step sign-in, have your phone or authenticator app ready.
- Connect to Wi-Fi or mobile data.

Adding a common account

1. Open **Settings** and look for **Mail** (on some versions it sits under **Apps**).
2. Tap **Accounts**, then **Add Account**.
3. Choose your provider, for example **Google** or **Microsoft Exchange / Outlook**.
4. Enter your email address and tap **Next**.
5. Sign in on the page that appears. This is the real provider sign-in page, so it is safe to type your password there.
6. Choose what to sync, such as **Mail**, **Contacts** and **Calendars**, then tap **Save**.

Adding an account from another provider

Choose **Other** and then **Add Mail Account**. Enter your name, email address, password and a short description. If the phone cannot find the settings itself, your email provider will have a page listing the "incoming" and "outgoing" server details. Only type in details from your provider's own website.

Checking it works

Open the **Mail** app and look for your inbox. Send yourself a test message and check it arrives.

If it will not connect

- Check you typed the address and password correctly.
- Some providers need an "app password" instead of your normal one. Your provider's help pages explain this.
- Restart the phone and try again.
- Never share your password with anyone who contacts you out of the blue.

When to get more help

Contact us if the phone keeps saying the password is wrong when you know it is right, if you see messages about the server or certificate that you do not understand, or if you are not sure what your provider is.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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How to set up your email on an Android phone

Android phones usually come with the Gmail app, and this can also hold addresses from other providers such as Outlook.com or Yahoo. This guide shows the general steps.

Different phone makers and Android versions label things slightly differently, so use the closest wording if yours is not identical.

Before you start

- Have your email address and password to hand.
- If you use two-step sign-in, keep your other device or app nearby.
- Connect to Wi-Fi or mobile data.

Adding an account in the Gmail app

1. Open the **Gmail** app.
2. Tap your profile picture or initial in the top corner.
3. Tap **Add another account**.
4. Choose **Google**, **Outlook**, **Hotmail and Live**, **Yahoo** or **Other**.
5. Follow the sign-in screens. These are the provider's own pages, so it is safe to enter your password.
6. When asked, accept the sync options and tap **Next**.

Using the Outlook app instead

If your work uses Microsoft 365, the **Outlook** app from the Google Play Store is often the best choice. Open it, tap **Add Account**, enter your email address and follow the prompts. Your workplace may ask you to approve extra security settings on the phone. That is normal.

If it will not connect

- Check the address and password, including capital letters.
- Make sure the phone's date and time are set automatically.
- Open **Settings**, then **Accounts**, to see whether the account shows a sync error.
- Some providers need an "app password" if two-step sign-in is on. Look on the provider's help pages for how to create one.
- Restart the phone and try again.

Staying safe

Only install email apps from the Google Play Store, and never enter your password on a page you reached by clicking a link in a message.

When to get more help

Contact us if the account keeps asking you to sign in again, if your workplace has special rules you cannot get past, or if you are unsure which settings your provider wants.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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How to add an email account to Outlook

Outlook on a computer can hold several email accounts at once. Adding one is usually quick, but the screens differ between the new Outlook, classic Outlook and Outlook on Mac.

Interfaces change, so use the closest menu wording if yours differs from the one here.

Before you start

- Know your email address and password.
- If your email is from work, check with your employer before adding it to a personal computer.
- Be connected to the internet.

Adding an account in classic Outlook for Windows

1. Open Outlook and click **File**.
2. Click **Add Account**.
3. Type your email address and click **Connect**.
4. Enter your password on the sign-in page and approve any two-step prompt.
5. Click **Done** when it says the account was added.

Adding an account in the new Outlook

Look for **Settings** (often a cog icon), then **Accounts** and **Email accounts**, then **Add account**. Follow the prompts in the same way.

Adding an account in Outlook on a Mac

Open **Outlook**, then look under the **Outlook** or **Tools** menu for **Accounts**, then use the plus button to add an email account.

If automatic setup fails

Outlook may offer **Advanced options** or **manual setup**. You would then need server details from your email provider. Find them on the provider's own website and be wary of any web page that is not theirs.

If something looks wrong

- A password that works on the web but not in Outlook may mean you need an app password. Your provider's help pages explain this.
- If you see a message about a certificate, do not just click through. Take a note of the wording and ask for help.
- Do not remove an existing account unless you are sure, because that can take its stored mail off the computer.

When to get more help

Contact us if Outlook asks for your password again and again, if your workplace uses special security rules, or if you are moving to a new computer and want your old emails kept safe.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

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How to recall or undo a sent email

Everyone sends an email too soon at some point. Sometimes you can pull it back, but it does not always work, so it helps to know what is possible.

Be realistic

Once an email is delivered, you generally cannot take it back from someone else's inbox. Recall features only work in limited cases, and the person may already have read the message. If it is serious, contact the person straight away.

Gmail: Undo Send

Right after you click Send, a small box appears at the bottom left saying **Message sent** with an **Undo** link. Click **Undo** quickly. You can lengthen this window in Gmail **Settings**, under the general settings, where you will find an **Undo Send** option. The exact place may change, so look for the wording.

Outlook on the web and the new Outlook

Look in your settings for **Undo send** or a similar option and choose a delay. After sending, an **Undo** button appears for a few seconds.

Classic Outlook for Windows

1. Open your **Sent Items** folder and double-click the message.
2. Look for **Message** then **Actions** then **Recall This Message**, if it is available.
3. Choose to delete unread copies and tick the box to be told how it went.

This only works inside the same organisation and Microsoft 365 or Exchange system, and only if the person has not opened it yet. It can also draw attention to the message.

If you cannot recall it

1. Send a short, polite follow-up such as "Sorry, please ignore my previous email."
2. If you sent sensitive information, tell the right person at your workplace. Do not delay.
3. If you sent a password, change it at once through the official sign-in page.

Avoid it next time

Add the recipient's address last, and re-read before clicking send.

When to get more help

Contact us if confidential information went to the wrong person, or if you want a sending delay set up on your email so you get a longer chance to undo.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

How to set up an out-of-office reply

An out-of-office reply (also called an automatic reply) tells people you are away and when you will be back. It saves you from a pile of worried follow-up messages.

Menus change between versions, so use the closest wording if yours looks different.

Decide what to say

Keep it short and clear. Include the dates you are away, who to contact in the meantime, and when you will reply. Avoid sharing details such as where you are going or that your house is empty. That information is useful to scammers and burglars.

A simple example: "Thank you for your email. I am away until Monday 20 October and will reply when I return. For urgent matters, please contact the office on the usual number."

Outlook (Microsoft 365)

1. In Outlook, look for **File** then **Automatic Replies**, or in the new Outlook and Outlook on the web look in **Settings** for **Automatic replies**.
2. Choose **Send automatic replies**.
3. Tick the option to send only during a time period and enter the start and end dates.
4. Type your message. You can write one for people inside your organisation and one for outside.
5. Click **OK** or **Save**.

Gmail

1. Click the cog icon and choose **See all settings**.
2. Scroll down to **Vacation responder** (it may be labelled **Out of office**).
3. Turn it on, set the dates, and add a subject and message.
4. Click **Save Changes**.

Check it works

Ask a friend to send you a test email. Remember it replies once to each sender, not to every message.

Turn it off

If you did not set an end date, remember to switch it off when you return. Leaving it on can make you look unresponsive.

Staying safe

Do not include your mobile number or home details in a message that goes to everybody.

When to get more help

Contact us if the reply is going to the wrong people, if it will not switch off, or if you want automatic forwarding set up while you are away. Forwarding work email to a personal account may be against your employer's rules, so check first.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

How to create an email signature

An email signature is the block of text that appears at the bottom of every message. It might include your name, job title, phone number and business name. A tidy signature looks professional and helps people contact you.

Menu wording may differ between versions, so use the closest option.

Decide what to include

Keep it short, ideally four or five lines.

- Your name
- Your role or business
- One phone number
- Website, if you have one

Skip long legal notices, big images and quotes unless you need them. Large pictures can make your email look like spam and can slow things down.

Outlook for Windows

1. Click **File** then **Options** then **Mail**.
2. Click **Signatures**.
3. Click **New**, give the signature a name, and type your details in the box.
4. Choose which signature to use for **New messages** and for **Replies/forwards**.
5. Click **OK**.

Outlook on the web and the new Outlook

Look in **Settings** for **Compose and reply** (or search settings for **Signature**). Type your details, choose when it is used, and click **Save**.

Gmail

1. Click the cog icon and choose **See all settings**.
2. Scroll to **Signature** and click **Create new**.
3. Type your signature and set when to use it.
4. Scroll down and click **Save Changes**.

On a phone

Mail apps usually have a signature option in their settings. Phone signatures are often separate from the one on your computer. The default may say "Sent from my phone", which you can change.

Pictures and links

If you add a logo, keep it small. If you add links, check that they work. Do not put your home address or personal details in a signature you use for work.

When to get more help

Contact us if your business needs matching signatures for several people, if the signature looks different on other people's screens, or if it keeps disappearing.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

Shared mailboxes: the basics

A shared mailbox is a single email address, such as info@ or accounts@, that several people can read and send from. It is useful for teams, because messages are not stuck in one person's inbox.

Shared mailboxes are normally created by whoever manages your Microsoft 365 or Google account. This guide covers using one, not creating one.

How it works

In Microsoft 365, a shared mailbox usually does not have its own password. Instead, people are given permission to open it using their own account. In Google Workspace, a similar idea can be set up with a group inbox or by delegating access. Names vary, so ask your administrator which one you have.

Opening a shared mailbox in Outlook

Often, it appears on its own in the left-hand folder list after your administrator has given you access. This can take some time, so wait a while and restart Outlook. If it does not appear, look for an option to **Open another mailbox** or **Add shared mailbox** in your account settings or by right-clicking your account name. Exact wording varies.

Sending as the shared mailbox

When you write a new message, check the **From** line. If it is not there, ask your administrator to confirm you have **Send as** or **Send on behalf** permission. Do not guess the setting.

Good habits for teams

- Agree who replies to what, so customers do not get two answers.
- Use categories, flags or folders to show which messages are being dealt with.
- Do not delete messages unless your team has agreed on it.
- Keep private information out of reply threads where possible.

Common problems

- **Cannot see the mailbox:** Wait, restart Outlook, and ask for permissions to be checked.
- **Sent items go to your own folder:** This is a common setting. Ask your administrator if replies should be kept in the shared mailbox instead.

When to get more help

Contact us if you need a shared mailbox created, if someone leaving needs access removed, or if you are unsure who has permission to read it. Access to a mailbox may include private customer information, so it should be reviewed regularly.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

Microsoft Teams: no sound or camera

When people cannot hear you, or you cannot see them, the cause is often a setting rather than a broken device. Work through these steps from the simplest.

Teams changes often, so use the nearest wording if your screen looks different.

Before the meeting

- Close other apps that may be using the camera, such as Zoom.
- Plug in headphones or a headset if you have one.
- Check your device volume is up and not muted.

Allow Teams to use your camera and microphone

On Windows, open **Settings** then **Privacy** (or **Privacy and security**), and check **Camera** and **Microphone**. Make sure access is switched on for apps, including Teams. On a Mac, look in **System Settings** then **Privacy and Security**. On phones, look in the app's permission settings.

Choose the right devices inside Teams

1. In the Teams call or meeting, find the **More** or three dots menu.
2. Choose **Settings** or **Device settings**.
3. Check the **Speaker**, **Microphone** and **Camera** lists, and choose the correct one.
4. Use any **Make a test call** option to check it.

Common reasons

- The microphone icon in the meeting has a line through it. Click it once to unmute.
- A physical mute button on a headset is switched on.
- A laptop camera has a privacy shutter or a keyboard shortcut that switches it off.
- Bluetooth headphones are connected to your phone instead.

If it still fails

1. Leave the meeting and rejoin.
2. Fully close and reopen Teams.
3. Restart the computer.
4. Try joining through a web browser instead of the app.
5. Install any waiting updates.

Do not

Do not uninstall Teams or drivers unless advised, as you may lose settings.

When to get more help

Contact us if the device does not appear in the list at all, if it works in other apps but not in Teams, or if the problem keeps coming back.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

How to join a Microsoft Teams meeting

You can join a Teams meeting from a link in an email or calendar invitation. You do not always need an account or even to install anything.

Teams changes over time, so use the closest wording if yours differs.

Joining from a link

1. Open the invitation and click **Join the meeting now** or **Join**.
2. Your browser may ask whether to open Teams. Choose to open it, or choose **Continue on this browser** if you do not have the app.
3. Allow the camera and microphone if you are asked.
4. Type your name if prompted.
5. Check your camera and sound settings, then click **Join now**.

Joining by phone

Some invitations include a phone number and a conference ID. You can dial in without a computer, but standard call charges may apply. Check with your provider.

Waiting in the lobby

Often you will see a message saying someone will let you in soon. This is normal. Stay on the page until the host admits you.

Useful buttons during the meeting

- **Mic:** mute and unmute yourself.
- **Camera:** switch your video on or off.
- **Chat:** write messages to everyone.
- **Raise hand:** let the host know you want to speak.
- **Leave:** exit the meeting.

Tips for a smooth call

- Join a couple of minutes early.
- Use headphones to reduce echo.
- Mute when you are not speaking.
- Sit facing a light rather than with a window behind you.

Staying safe

Only join meetings from people you know. Do not click meeting links in unexpected messages, and do not share the link publicly, as strangers could join.

If the link will not work

Try another browser, make sure you are not using an old copy of the link, and ask the host to resend it.

When to get more help

Contact us if you cannot hear anyone, if the link says you do not have permission, or if you want to host meetings and are not sure how to send invitations.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

How to share your screen in Teams, Zoom or Google Meet

Sharing your screen lets others see what you see, which is helpful for presentations and for showing someone a problem. The idea is the same in each service, though the buttons look different.

Interfaces change, so use the nearest wording.

Before you share

- Close anything private, such as emails, banking, and personal messages.
- Turn off pop-up notifications if you can.
- Decide whether to share the whole screen or just one window. Sharing one window is safer.

Teams

1. Join the meeting.
2. Click **Share** at the top or bottom of the meeting window.
3. Choose **Screen** or a particular **Window**.
4. To include sound from a video, look for a tick box such as **Include computer sound**.
5. Click **Stop sharing** when done.

Zoom

1. Click **Share Screen** in the toolbar.
2. Pick a screen or window and click **Share**.
3. Click **Stop Share** when finished.

Google Meet

1. Click **Present now**.
2. Choose **Your entire screen**, **A window** or **A tab**.
3. Pick what to show and click **Share**.
4. Click **Stop presenting** to end it.

If the option is missing or greyed out

- The host may have limited who can share. Ask them to allow you.
- On Mac, you may need to allow screen recording for the app under **System Settings**, then **Privacy and Security**. Restart the app afterwards.
- Try the app instead of a browser, or the other way around.

If others see a black screen

Try sharing a window instead of the whole screen, or close and reopen the app.

Never share with strangers

Be cautious if someone you do not know asks you to share your screen or let them control it. This is a common scam tactic.

When to get more help

Contact us if you cannot get screen sharing to work after these checks, or if someone has asked to take control of your computer and you are unsure about it.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

Zoom and Google Meet: the basics and common fixes

Zoom and Google Meet both let you join video calls from a link. They work in a similar way, and most problems come down to permissions, the wrong device selected or a weak connection.

Screens change often, so use the nearest wording if yours differs.

Joining a call

1. Click the link in your invitation.
2. For Zoom, choose to open the app or **Join from your browser**. For Meet, the call opens in your browser.
3. Allow the camera and microphone when asked.
4. Enter your name if prompted and click **Join** or **Ask to join**.
5. Wait if you are held in a waiting room until the host lets you in.

Useful buttons

- The microphone and camera buttons switch you on and off.
- **Chat** lets you type to everyone.
- The share button lets you show your screen.
- **Leave** or the red phone icon ends your part of the call.

Common fixes

- **They cannot hear you:** Click the microphone to unmute, then use the small arrow beside it (or the settings option) to choose the correct microphone.
- **You cannot hear them:** Check your volume and the speaker choice in settings. Try headphones.
- **Camera is black:** Close other apps that might be using it, and check your browser or system privacy settings allow it.
- **Frozen or choppy:** Turn your video off, move closer to the router, or close other apps that use the internet.
- **Echo:** Use headphones, and ask others to mute when not speaking.

Staying safe

- Only join calls from people you know.
- Do not post meeting links publicly.
- Be wary of anyone who asks for payment or personal details during a call.
- Download Zoom only from its official website or your device's app store.

If a call will not start

Update the app, restart your device, or try a different browser.

When to get more help

Contact us if your device does not show up in the settings, if you host calls and want advice on waiting rooms and passcodes, or if the same problem keeps returning.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

Google storage full: Gmail, Drive and Photos

A free Google account comes with a set amount of storage shared across Gmail, Google Drive and Google Photos. When it fills up, you may stop receiving email and you may not be able to upload photos or files.

Google's pages change from time to time, so use the nearest wording.

See what is using the space

Search for "Google One storage" or go to your Google account page and look for **Storage**. It shows a breakdown across Gmail, Drive and Photos, and it may suggest large items to review.

Gmail

- Search for large attachments by typing **has:attachment larger:10M** in the Gmail search box.
- Open the messages and decide whether you still need them. Save any attachment you want to keep to your computer first.
- Empty **Spam** and **Trash**, as they still count towards your storage. Emptying the trash cannot be undone.

Google Drive

- Look at the list sorted by size and check any big old files.
- Remember that deleted files stay in **Trash** until it is emptied.
- Ask others before deleting files that were shared with you.

Google Photos

Photos and videos often take the most space. Download copies to your computer or an external drive before you delete anything. Check that the copies open properly first.

Other choices

- Buy more storage. Google sells monthly or yearly plans, but check the price and cancel terms.
- Move old files elsewhere.
- Close old accounts that you no longer need, after saving anything from them. Only do this using Google's official steps.

Be careful

Do not click on emails or pop-ups claiming your storage is full and asking for payment. Check your real storage only by going to Google's own site.

When to get more help

Contact us if you are not sure what is safe to delete, if your account is full but you cannot find what is using the space, or if you want a proper backup of photos and documents before clearing space.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

OneDrive is not syncing

OneDrive keeps your files in step between your computer and the cloud. When it stops, you may see a cloud icon with a red cross, a pause symbol or an error message. In most cases it can be fixed without losing anything, but please do not delete files while troubleshooting.

Menus differ between versions, so use the nearest wording.

Look at the icon

Find the OneDrive cloud icon near the clock (you may need to click the small arrow to see hidden icons). Click it. It will usually say what is wrong, such as **Sync paused**, **Signed out** or **Storage full**.

Quick checks

1. Make sure you are online.
2. If sync is paused, click **Resume syncing**.
3. If asked, sign in again with the correct account.
4. Check you have storage left in your OneDrive account. Look on the OneDrive website under your account or storage details.
5. Check your computer has free disk space.

Common causes

- **File open in another program:** Close it and wait.
- **File name problems:** Very long names, or characters such as * ? : " < > | cannot be used in file names.
- **File too large or too many files:** Sync may be slow rather than stuck. Give it time.
- **Different accounts:** You may be signed in with a personal account when your files are on a work one.

What to try next

- Restart OneDrive: right-click the icon, choose to close it, and open it again from the Start menu.
- Restart the computer.
- Install any updates for Windows and Office.

Please do not

Do not unlink the account or reset OneDrive unless advised. Resetting can cause a long re-sync, and if files exist only on this computer it is risky. First check the OneDrive website to see that your files are there.

When to get more help

Contact us if a file shows a red cross for days, if you see messages about conflicts or duplicate copies, or if files appear to have gone missing. If so, stop making changes and check the website's **Recycle bin** first.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

Google Drive for desktop: the basics

Google Drive for desktop puts your Drive files on your computer, so you can open and save them like any other file. It is handy for backing up folders and working offline.

The app and its settings change over time, so use the closest wording.

Installing it

Download it only from Google's official site (search for "Google Drive for desktop" and check the address). Run the installer and sign in with your Google account when asked.

Two ways of working

- **Stream files:** Files stay mostly in the cloud and download when you open them. It saves space on your computer.
- **Mirror files:** Everything is kept both on the computer and online. It uses more space but works offline.

You can usually pick this in the app's preferences. If you are not sure, keep the default.

Finding your files

After setup, Drive appears as a drive or a folder in File Explorer (Windows) or Finder (Mac). Open it and you will see **My Drive**. Files you save in there are copied to the cloud.

Backing up folders

In the app's preferences, you may be offered **Add folder** under your computer's folders, such as Documents or Desktop. This copies them to Google Drive. Check how much storage you have first, because it counts towards your Google storage.

Things to remember

- Files you delete from the Drive folder are deleted online too. Deleted files usually sit in **Trash** for a while, but do not rely on it.
- Do not move files out of Drive by drag and drop unless you mean to.
- Wait for the sync icon to finish before shutting down.

If sync is stuck

Click the Drive icon near the clock and look for a message. Check you are online, signed in and not out of space. Restart the app and the computer.

When to get more help

Contact us if you see errors on certain files, if a folder was backed up by mistake, or if you want help choosing what to sync.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

How to share files safely using links and permissions

Sharing a link is quick, but it can also let the wrong people see your files. A little care with permissions keeps your information safe. This applies to OneDrive, SharePoint, Google Drive and similar services.

Names and buttons change, so use the nearest wording.

Know the two things you choose

1. **Who** can open the link.
2. **What** they can do with it.

Who can open the link

- **Specific people:** Only the people you name, who may need to sign in. This is the safest option.
- **People in your organisation:** Anyone in your workplace account.
- **Anyone with the link:** Anyone who has the link, even if you did not send it to them. Use this with care, as links can be forwarded.

What they can do

- **View** (or **Viewer**): they can read the file only.
- **Comment:** they can leave comments.
- **Edit** (or **Editor**): they can change the file, and in some cases delete it.

Choose the smallest option that does the job. Most people only need to view.

How to share

1. Find the file in your cloud storage.
2. Right-click it, or tap the three dots, and choose **Share**.
3. Check the settings on the link, often shown as a small gear or a drop-down.
4. Add names or email addresses, or copy the link.
5. Send it, and where possible add a message so the person knows it is genuine.

Checking and stopping sharing

Look for **Manage access** or the share button on the file to see who has it. You can remove a person or turn off the link. Stopping sharing does not delete the file, but it will stop others opening it.

Good habits

- Do not share whole folders if one file will do.
- Avoid putting personal data, bank details or passwords in shared files.
- Review old shares from time to time.
- Be careful with links you receive. Check they come from someone you expect.

When to get more help

Contact us if you shared something private by mistake, if you cannot tell who has access, or if you run a business and need clear rules about sharing client files.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Medium | 2 min read

Word or Excel crashed: how to recover an unsaved file

When Word or Excel closes unexpectedly, your work is often not lost. Office keeps temporary copies in the background. Stay calm, and avoid saving over anything until you have looked.

Menu names vary between versions, so use the closest wording.

Reopen the app first

When you start Word or Excel again after a crash, a **Document Recovery** panel often appears on the left. It lists recovered versions.

1. Click each one to preview it.
2. Choose the newest or most complete one.
3. Click **Save As** and give it a new name, so you do not overwrite the original.

If the panel does not appear

1. Open Word or Excel.
2. Click **File** then **Open**.
3. Look for **Recover Unsaved Documents** (Word) or **Recover Unsaved Workbooks** (Excel). It is usually near the bottom of the recent files list, or under **Manage Document** or **Manage Workbook** in the **Info** section.
4. Open any listed file and use **Save As** straight away.

Check AutoSave and previous versions

If the file is stored in OneDrive or SharePoint and **AutoSave** was on, look at **File** then **Info** then **Version History**. Older versions may be listed.

Search for backup copies

Search your computer for the file name. Word sometimes keeps files starting with "~" or ending in .asd or .wbk. Do not delete these until you have your work back.

Prevent a repeat

- Turn on **AutoSave** when the file is online.
- Press **Ctrl + S** often.
- Keep Office updated.
- Do not open huge files from email attachments directly. Save them first.

If it keeps crashing

Try opening the app in Safe Mode by holding **Ctrl** while you click its icon. This switches off add-ins. If it helps, an add-in may be the cause. Do not remove add-ins you do not recognise.

Please do not

Do not repair or reinstall Office until you have tried to recover the work.

When to get more help

Contact us if the file will not open, says it is corrupt, or shows only strange characters. Do not keep trying to save over it.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

Excel basics: freeze panes, adding up and filters

Excel can look intimidating, but a few simple tricks solve many everyday headaches. Menus differ between versions, so use the closest wording.

Freeze panes: keep headings in view

When you scroll down a long list, the headings can disappear. To keep them:

1. Click the cell just below the heading row and to the right of any column you want to keep.
2. Click the **View** tab.
3. Click **Freeze Panes**, then choose **Freeze Panes** again.

To undo it, go to the same menu and choose **Unfreeze Panes**. You can also choose **Freeze Top Row** if you only need the top line.

Adding up numbers

1. Click the empty cell below the numbers you want to add.
2. Click **AutoSum** on the **Home** tab (it shows a Greek letter sigma).
3. Check that the highlighted numbers are the right ones.
4. Press **Enter**.

You can also type `=SUM(` and then drag over the cells, close the bracket and press **Enter**. If the total looks wrong, some numbers may have been entered as text. They are often left-aligned or have a green corner.

Filtering a list

1. Click inside your data.
2. Click the **Data** tab and then **Filter**.
3. Small arrows appear on each heading. Click one and untick what you do not want to see.
4. Click **OK**.

Filtered rows are hidden, not deleted. To show everything again, click **Clear** in the same menu, or turn **Filter** off.

Sorting

Use the filter arrow and choose to sort A to Z or smallest to largest. Make sure you select all the columns first, or sort inside a filtered table, so that rows stay together. Sorting only one column scrambles data.

Be careful

- Save a copy before big changes.
- Do not delete rows when you mean to hide them.
- Use **Ctrl + Z** to undo a mistake straight away.

When to get more help

Contact us if figures keep changing unexpectedly, if formulas show errors such as `#REF!` or `#VALUE!`, or if a business spreadsheet is very important and you are not sure it is correct.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.

Email & online accounts | Easy | 2 min read

How to fill in or sign a PDF

You can complete most PDF forms and add a signature on your own computer or phone, without printing. The easiest method depends on what is installed.

Programs change, so use the closest wording on your screen.

Check what kind of PDF it is

Open the file and click in a field. If the cursor appears and you can type, it is a fillable form. If not, it is a flat document, and you can add text boxes on top.

Using a free PDF reader

Adobe Acrobat Reader is free from Adobe's official website. Open the PDF in it, then look for **Fill & Sign**. Click on the page where you want text and type. The tool can also add ticks, crosses and dates.

Using your web browser

Browsers such as Edge and Chrome can open PDFs and sometimes let you type in fillable fields. Edge also has tools for drawing and adding text. Save the result afterwards, using **Save** or **Print** and then **Save as PDF**.

Adding a signature

1. In your PDF tool, choose **Fill & Sign** or **Sign**.
2. Choose **Add signature**.
3. Draw it with your mouse, finger or stylus, type it, or insert a picture of your handwritten signature.
4. Click where it should go and resize it.
5. Save the file with a new name.

On an iPhone or iPad

Open the PDF in **Files** or **Mail** and tap **Markup** (a pen icon). Use the **+** button to add a signature or text.

On Android

Many phones have a PDF app or Google Drive. Look for a pen or edit button.

Staying safe

- Be careful with free online PDF websites. Anything you upload may be stored by someone else, so do not use them for forms with bank details, passport numbers or other private information.
- A signature picture can be copied, so do not share it publicly.
- Keep the original blank form.

When to get more help

Contact us if the form will not let you type, if the signature disappears after saving, or if you are unsure whether a signature method is acceptable.

Still stuck? Email admin@visiontech336.com and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.