

[R.I.P. Email Game - How to Keep the Email Productivity Up Without it](#)

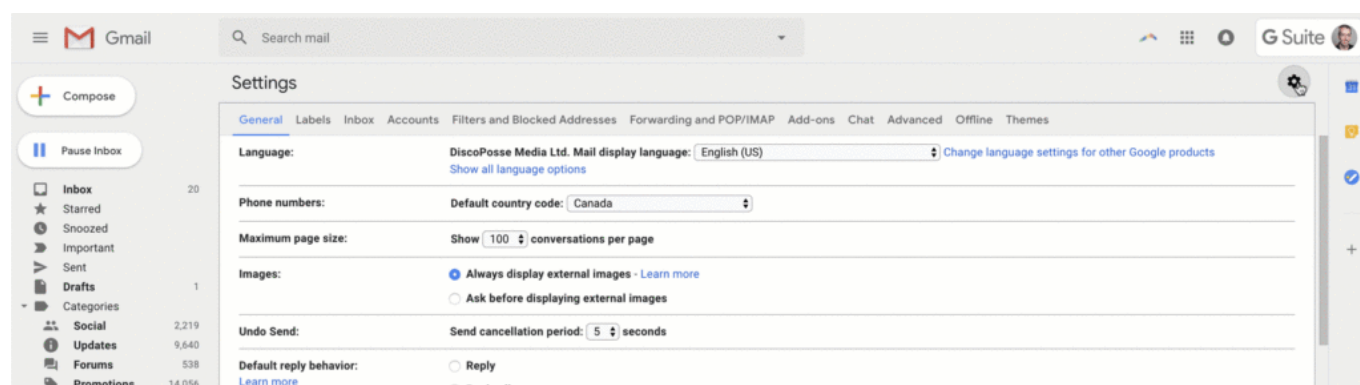
If you're followed some of my previous posts around personal productivity, you may have seen that I am a huge fan of [The Email Game from Baydin](#). It's also important to know that the goal of why I use the email game is not zero email. It's about moving more productively through email and the tasks and projects that come from it. This is why [inbox zero is not really the goal. Flow of work is](#).

Today I found out that Baydin is closing the doors on the email game as of February 7th, 2019. Noooooo!!!

Using Gmail Auto-Advance to Move Through Email Better (and Faster!)

Open up your Gmail and click on the settings options. Then open up the Advanced option and you'll see a feature called **Auto-Advance** which is off by default. Once you enable that feature you will open up your top email and then the Gmail web client will automatically move to the next message where you can archive, skip, or reply.

Here's where to find that option:



Keep using the same process you did in the past with the email game. Start at the top and and keep yourself moving quickly and effectively through your inbox. Forcing the flow like this causes you to cut down on the wasted time normally spent mulling over how to respond or when to mark a message unread and file it away for later...which is just deferring the pain of processing it now which can be done in seconds.

Hopefully you find this tip helpful. Please let me know in the comments below if you like these kinds of posts! Many more where this came from as I learn more about personal productivity hacks that I love to share with everyone.

[Why Inbox Zero may Not be What you Think](#)

but it is Better than you Realized

Inbox Zero is probably not what you think it is. There is a fairly common misconception that just doing a Select All | Delete would count as Inbox Zero. There is a generally good feeling that comes from the clean look of an empty inbox, but that is really just part of the real psychology behind it all.

Let's take a look at some of the reasons why Inbox Zero is a huge productivity winner and also how to get there.

Inbox Zero is about flow, not message counts

I wrote about the [Email Game previously](#) and have been practicing this method on a daily basis. Every day at 10 AM the game begins and sometimes I follow up with an afternoon edition in cases where there is a big buildup of content.

Dropping the message count down to zero is a cathartic feeling. That's not the real reason Inbox Zero is important, though. The real reason is about the **flow of work** which is affected by the way that tools like the email game make us work. By rapidly forcing cleanup and answering emails in seconds instead of labouring over them for minutes to get the same result, we increase the **flow** which means increased productivity.

Flexing the Email Muscle

Stacks of emails are no different than piles of paper which need to be dealt with. The count is important and has a profound psychological (and even a physiological) effect on you as I wrote in a recent blog on [Why Badges and Notifications are Killing your Productivity](#). Moving the badge counter to zero **by increasing the flow of work effectively** means that you are increasing the output and training your email muscles.

Any communication is meant to simply move the flow of work and keep track of data/details to ensure we are communicating effectively. Email often becomes a long-form version of instant messaging apps. A former manager I worked with once said "if you have more than 3 replies to an email, pick up the phone".

Moving emails through and assigning real todo items into lists or other tools like Kanban or task management products will lead to a cleaner flow from inbox to output. Time to start your training!

Your First Inbox Zero Training

When you run the process of the Email Game it teaches you do a few things which are practices and methods to increase productivity:

1. **Discard or archive unneeded email** - spam, ads, and general mails that you usually spend time on are quickly moved through to archive or trash You will become adept at scanning and archiving to really decide what's necessary to keep
2. **Boomerang content that needs to be revisited by giving it an honest priority** - 2 hours, 4 hours, 8 hours, tomorrow and more. These are deferrals which you become much better at honestly assigning priority to
3. **Reply / Reply All** - Separate buttons (thank you for reducing Reply to All storms by accident!) which give you a timer to answer the email. When the clock is running, you learn to be concise

and quick.

4. **Open and interact** - timer stops while you click into the email which opens in another tab. Sometimes you need a little time to dig into the content

Start with the first batch of emails and then think about things like “how can I reply quickly but get an effective response?” and also think about changing from using your inbox and unread emails as a todo list. If you have email that needs to be revisited, the boomerang feature is super cool. You can even reply and set it to remind you after a period of time if no reply comes back.

Inbox Zero Achieved, Now What?

Practice, practice, practice! Make this a daily habit. As I mentioned in my notifications and productivity blog, the habit of managing email as a batch process means that you free up that nagging feeling where you have to check all the time to see what’s new. Don’t deal with email when it comes in. Deal with email on your schedule which creates the habit for both you and for the folks you communicate via email with. We all need to be trained on getting better productivity ☐

Time your batch processing to a few times a day on specific intervals. Here is how to make that work:

PRODUCTIVITY HACK #1 - Don’t open email until 10 AM. Seriously, this works once you get used to it. Start with 8, then 9, then eventually you will find that most of the early emails are people pitching content over the fence so that they clear up their todo list.

My email cycle is to generally not open email until 9 or 10 AM. This includes work and personal email. From there, CLOSE YOUR EMAIL CLIENT!! Yes, you read that correctly. Close down your email until after lunch. Then batch process email and prioritize what is current for the day, then CLOSE YOUR EMAIL AGAIN. Set your next batch at 3 PM or so, and then once more at the end of the day.

If you follow the more aggressive Cal Newport / Tim Ferriss methods, they use things like days-in-a-row without email and auto-responders, but I tend towards the more early stages of email batch handling which has proven to be super helpful.

Let me know what you think and your own methods by dropping in a comment. Sharing your successes and challenges helps all of our readers and I learn every day from how my peers take on and adopt productivity habits.

[Productivity Hack: The Email Game](#)

UPDATE 1/10/2019: The Email Game is no longer supported

- see the following blog for details:

<https://discoposse.com/2019/01/10/r-i-p-email-game-how-to-keep-the-email-productivity-up-without-it/>

The (email) struggle is real. At this point, I get between 20-50 emails a day. Which ones are meaningful? Which ones need to be dealt with today, tomorrow, right now, not at all?! These are the questions that lead to slowness in my replying to email, or often missed messages altogether. Plus, I spend about 1 hour a day just going through and checking which is necessary, marking them as unread, flagging, or trying other ways to “set it to be dealt with later” and the reality is that later often doesn’t ever arrive.

One of the more powerful life/productivity hacks that I’ve been introduced to is the [Email Game](#) from [Boomerang](#) (Formerly Baydin) which turned me from an email backlog owner to a clear inbox in all of the best ways. I

Inbox Zero is not the goal here. The goal is actually moving the needle on productively and efficiently managing email.

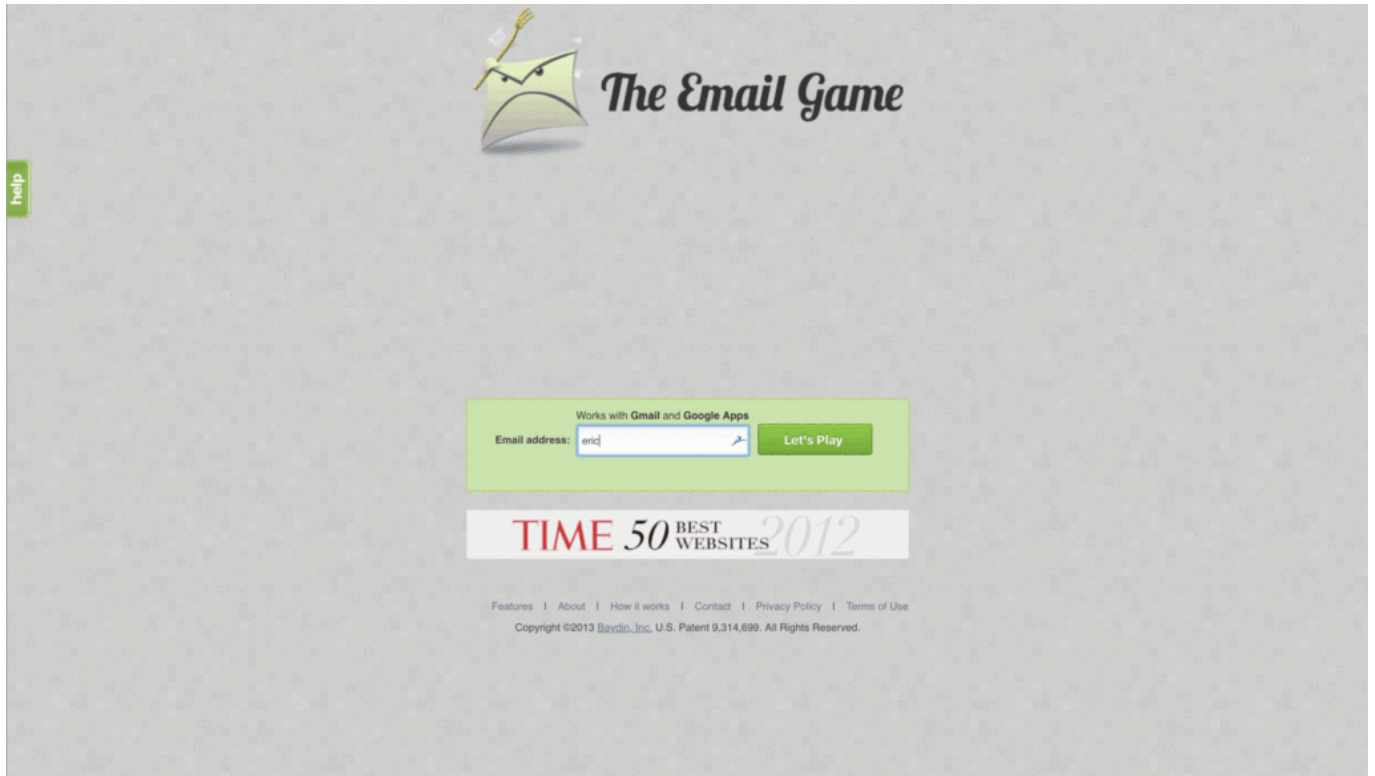
It’s pretty simple:

1. Go to <https://emailgame.baydin.com/>
2. Put in your GMail address (works with Google Apps mail too)
3. Process in the time limits and let the productivity goodness become a part of your daily regimen

The tool will present you with a countdown timer for each email. You get points for archiving/deleting or processing emails as quickly as you can. The bonus comes in the reply countdown timer which gives a much needed nudge to just get to the reply and get it done. You see the emoji giving you some guidance and it even frowns when you skip a message, which you should see as a key indicator that just saving it for later is a bad way to handle it.

You can also use Boomerang to mark the message to be dealt with later or watch for no reply and other rules. Another post to come on how Boomerang has helped me as well.

Full credit to [Tim Ferris](#) for introducing me to this one. Here’s the fast GIF version of what the process looks like:



Make Productivity Fun, and Habitual

The key to using this is to first have fun with it. Seriously, this is a very fun way to get email processed and teach yourself to just get down to it without wasting time on stuff that normally injects productivity-killing slowdowns in your day to day.

Set up a daily reminder to go to the email game and rock your inbox. I even force myself to a specific regimen at this point to ONLY use email game unless I'm specifically searching for email. This gets me into the habit of not spending hours of my day constantly checking for new emails.

Hope that you enjoy this handy productivity tool and find the benefit like I have from it.

