

Managing the Outlook PST File

All information in Outlook is stored in a single file called a Personal Storage Table or PST. This includes email messages, contacts, calendars, tasks, and notes. Over time this file can grow to be very large. The larger the PST file is, the slower Outlook runs and the more prone it becomes to problems.

Outlook seems to run best with a PST file that is 2GB or smaller. So the goal of managing the size of the PST file is to move items out on a regular basis and keep the size below 2GB. Outlook will stay fast and responsive and if you ever have problems with your PST file they can be fixed much quicker.

Outlook has an auto archive function but it pretty much just moves messages from your sent folder. And because it always uses the same archive folder, over time the archive file can also get too large.

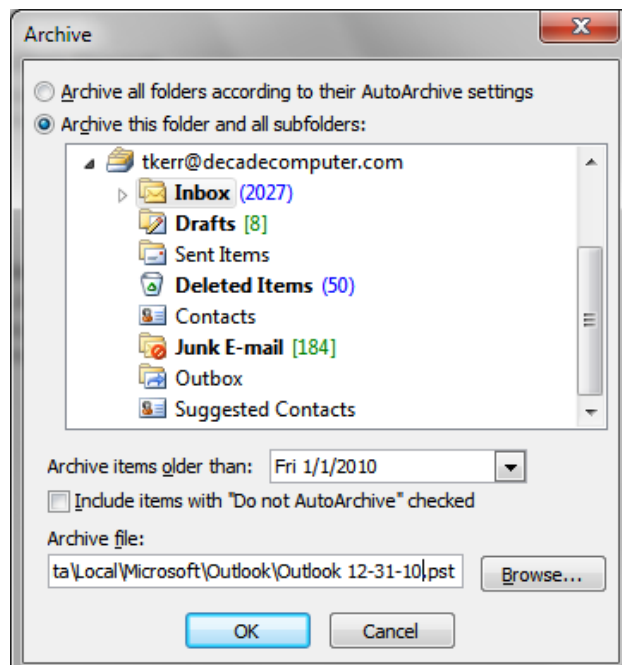
It is best to use the manual archive command to move items to separate PST files – usually organized by date or subject.

Archive Old Mail to Keep the PST File Small

- Choose an interval for archiving your Outlook data file (at least once a year).
- Use the Archive command to move all messages older than a certain date to a new PST file. The archive command will preserve your message and folder organization in both PST files. If folders only contain older messages they will be empty in the active PST file.

Run the archive command:

- **Outlook 2007 or 2003:** Select File | Archive... from the file menu
- **Outlook 2010:** File | Info | Mailbox Cleanup | Cleanup Tools | Archive...



Select Inbox and choose the option to archive this folder and all subfolders.

Name the archive file with the date so you can easily find archived email – for example:

Outlook 12-31-2010.pst

When the file is loaded in Outlook 2007 or 2003 it will be called **archive**. You should change the name – otherwise all your archives will display the name **archive** when loaded and will be difficult to tell apart. You can change the name by right clicking on the loaded file in Outlook and choose properties.

Compress the Active PST File

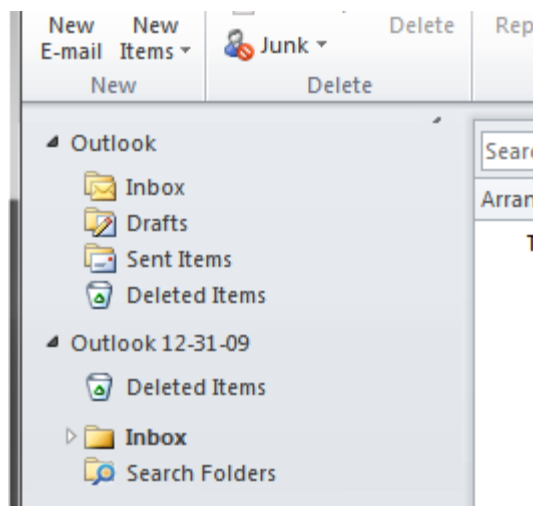
- The PST file is like a data base. Archiving items only marks the items as being unused – it does not reduce the file size until you compact the file to reclaim unused space. To manually start reclaiming unused space in an Outlook PST file:
 - **Outlook 2007 or 2003:** Select *File | Data File Management...* from the menu
 - **Outlook 2010:** Select *File | Info | Account Settings | Data Files*
 - Highlight the desired PST file.
 - Click *Settings....*
 - Now click *Compact Now*.

Access Mail from an Archive PST File

To view messages from an archive PST file:

- Select *File | Open | Outlook Data File...*
- Highlight the desired archive PST file.
- Click *Open*.

The PST file and its folders will appear under *Mail Folders*, ready for action.



When done using the archive file, right click on the name under Mail Folders and choose close.

Outlook will run much slower if it is still has to load your old messages. Just putting them in a separate file doesn't make Outlook faster. Close your archive when you are not using it.