MIGRATION PLAYBOOK · EMAIL AND DOMAINS

How to migrate IMAP email to Microsoft 365

Move mailboxes from a web host, cPanel server, Zoho Mail or any IMAP service into Exchange Online using Microsoft's built-in IMAP migration, then switch MX without losing mail.

Updated 4 Nov 2026 7 phases 24 detailed steps 11 official sources

START HERE

How do you migrate IMAP email to Microsoft 365?

SHORT ANSWER

This moves email from a web host, cPanel server, Zoho Mail or another IMAP service (the standard way mail apps read a mailbox) into Microsoft 365. Microsoft's built-in IMAP migration copies each mailbox's mail folders and keeps copying new mail until you switch over.

- **Recommended route:** Microsoft IMAP migration batch (built into Exchange Online)
- **Order:** Create the new mailboxes first, prove the copy on a pilot, then copy everyone while mail still arrives at the old host.
- **7 phases:** Get ready, Set up Microsoft 365, Prepare passwords and CSV, Copy the mail, Move contacts and calendars, Switch over and Check and clean up.
- **You're done when:** Every mailbox shows Synced with no errors, and its folders match the old webmail.

Contacts and calendars do not move, so you export and import those yourself. Allow at least a few days: the first copy runs in the background, and the batch should keep copying new mail for at least 72 hours after the switch.

RECOMMENDED ROUTE

Microsoft IMAP migration batch (built into Exchange Online)

Included with Exchange Online at no extra charge, runs from the Exchange admin center, and keeps copying new mail about once a day until you delete the batch.

▼ **Other options and when to use them**

- **PST export and import**
  : A few mailboxes break the size or item limits, or the host blocks Microsoft's connection.
- **Third-party tool such as CodeTwo Office 365 Migration or MigrationWiz**
  : The host cannot cope with the native copy, or you need date filters or jobs that run only overnight.
- **Microsoft's Google Workspace or Exchange migration**
  : Your old email is Google Workspace or Exchange Server. Those tools also move calendars and contacts.

TOOLS FOR THIS PLAN

Not sure which route?
Answer 6 quick questions

Are you ready?
22-question readiness check

Plan your dates
Dated countdown you can add to your calendar

Tell your staff
Staff guide and ready-to-send emails

Compare options
Compare Microsoft 365 migration tools

Check your DNS
MX, SPF, DKIM and DMARC lookup

New to the jargon?
Plain-English migration glossary

ORDER TO MIGRATE IN, AND WHY

Create the new mailboxes first, prove the copy on a pilot, then copy everyone while mail still arrives at the old host. Change the MX record (the DNS setting that tells the internet where to deliver your email) only once the copies are in place, and cancel nothing until the last top-up copy has run.

1. **Inventory of mailboxes, shared addresses and anything else that sends as your domain**
   It tells you which users and shared mailboxes to create, which rows go in the migration CSV file, and which forms and scanners must be repointed later.
2. **Lower the MX record TTL and save the current DNS records**

TTL is how long other systems cache your record. A short TTL takes effect only after the old one runs out, so do it days ahead. The saved records are your way back.

3 **Domain, users and shared mailboxes in Microsoft 365 (MX unchanged)**

The batch can only copy into mailboxes that exist. Leaving MX alone keeps mail arriving at the old host, so nothing is missed during the copy.

4 **Passwords (or app passwords), endpoint and a pilot batch of two or three mailboxes**

Proves the server settings and sign-ins, and shows whether the host blocks or slows Microsoft, before you commit everyone.

5 **Batches for everyone else, large mailboxes outside business hours**

The first copy is the slow part. Doing it while people still use the old webmail means no downtime, and the batch then tops up daily.

6 **Contacts, calendars, rules and signatures, in the switch-over week**

The batch does not copy them. Exporting close to the switch catches recent changes, and it must happen before the old service closes.

7 **MX and SPF change, repointed forms and scanners, then devices the next day**

Mailboxes are already full when mail starts arriving, other senders keep passing SPF, and devices download from the new account only once.

8 **Keep the batch 72 hours, check, then delete it and cancel the old host**

Some senders use the old MX for up to 72 hours, and the batch copies that mail. Deleting the batch ends the copy and your easy way back.

SETTINGS CHECKLIST: DECIDE THESE BEFORE YOU COPY

Built-in and third-party tools treat these differently. Tick each one off once you have decided.

Download this checklist (Excel)

- [ ] **What the copy moves, and what it leaves behind**

  Which data each user needs in Microsoft 365, and how the data the copy skips will get there.

  ▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: copies only mail in the inbox and other mail folders. Microsoft states it does not move contacts, calendar items or tasks. Filters, signatures and

	automatic replies are not mail items, so they stay behind too.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	Reads the source over IMAP, which carries mail only. Plan contacts and calendars separately.
audriga	Also copies contacts and calendars, from Roundcube or Horde webmail or over CardDAV and CalDAV, where the old host offers them. Test one account first.

Tip: Export each user's contacts (CSV or vCard) and calendar (.ics) from the old webmail before cutover. Outlook imports contacts from CSV only.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

- [ ] **Mailbox size and old mail**

Whether every mailbox comes across whole, or very old mail stays behind or goes into the archive mailbox (extra online-only storage) by PST.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: copies up to 500,000 items per mailbox, newest first. Anything past that is not copied. There is no date filter.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	A time filter excludes items older or newer than a date you set, so old mail can follow in a later pass or stay behind.
MigrationWiz	Advanced Options set the earliest and latest date to migrate.

Tip: Check item counts in the inventory. For a mailbox near the limit, export older mail to PST in classic Outlook (the older Outlook for Windows desktop app) and import it into the archive mailbox.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

- [ ] **Large messages**

What happens to messages too big to copy, usually old ones with large attachments.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: the largest message it copies is 35 MB. Larger messages are skipped.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	Advanced settings let you set the largest item size to migrate.

PST import (Microsoft Purview)	Skips only items over 150 MB, and raises the mailbox receive limit to 150 MB when it needs to.

Tip: Ask users to save attachments from very large messages to OneDrive before the old account closes.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

- [ ] **Folders to leave out, such as Junk and Trash**

Which folders are not worth copying.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: copies every folder unless you exclude it under Migration filtering options in the batch wizard (ExcludeFolders in PowerShell), using folder names as the IMAP server shows them. Microsoft says folders with a forward slash (/) in the name are not migrated.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	A folder filter excludes chosen folders completely.
MigrationWiz	Filters folders with regular expressions (text patterns).

Tip: Ask users to empty Trash and Junk in the old webmail first, and rename any folder with a / in its name.

Microsoft Learn: Tips for optimizing IMAP migrations

- [ ] **Read status, flags and dates**

Whether read or unread status, flags and original received dates must look the same after the move.

▼ How each tool handles it

Built-in method	Not stated in Microsoft's documentation: test it in your pilot.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	Not stated in CodeTwo's documentation: test it in your pilot.
MigrationWiz	Not stated in BitTitan's documentation: test it in your pilot.

Tip: In the pilot, compare a few folders in Outlook on the web with the old webmail: unread counts, flagged messages and dates.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

- [ ] **Mailbox passwords**

Whether to reset each password for the copy, or use an admin sign-in if the server supports one.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: signs in as each user with the password in the CSV file. Microsoft documents admin (master) sign-in formats only for Exchange, Dovecot and Mirapoint servers, and says some servers, such as Courier IMAP and Oracle IMAP, do not support it.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	Also takes each mailbox login and password from a CSV file.

Tip: Check whether the host needs app passwords (separate passwords for mail apps) when two-step sign-in is on. Otherwise tell users first, reset passwords in one sitting, and reset them again after the batch is deleted.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate other types of IMAP mailboxes

☐ **Users, shared mailboxes and aliases**

Which old addresses become licensed users, shared mailboxes, aliases (extra addresses on a user) or distribution lists.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Microsoft 365: each person needs a licence that includes Exchange Online. A shared mailbox needs no licence, and each user can have up to 400 aliases. The batch copies into the mailbox named in each CSV row, so that mailbox must exist first.

Tip: Licence only real people. Point the CSV row for a shared login at its shared mailbox.

Microsoft Learn: Create a shared mailbox

☐ **How many mailboxes copy at once**

How hard to push the old host, and when large batches run.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: the migration endpoint (the saved connection to the old server) sets how many mailboxes copy at once (MaxConcurrentMigrations in PowerShell), and you can lower it. There is no setting to run only in certain hours. Microsoft advises raising source connection limits and running small test batches to measure speed.

CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	Sets how many mailboxes migrate at once, has a throttling step for IMAP servers that limit connections, and a Scheduler that runs jobs only in the hours you choose.
MigrationWiz	Sets how many migrations run at the same time.

Tip: Start large batches outside business hours, and run several small batches rather than one big one.

Microsoft Learn: Tips for optimizing IMAP migrations

- [ ] **Top-up copies after the switch**

When to change the MX record, and how long to keep copying mail that still reaches the old server.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Built-in IMAP batch: after the first copy it syncs new mail about once a day until you delete the batch. Microsoft says to keep it running for at least 72 hours after the MX change. Deleting the batch stops the copying for good.
CodeTwo Office 365 Migration	A delta pass (a top-up copy of only what changed) copies only new items, not changed ones.

Tip: Ask users not to change their old password until the batch is deleted. Microsoft warns that new mail on the old server then stops being copied.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate other types of IMAP mailboxes

- [ ] **Retention and archive policies in Microsoft 365**

Whether any policy that deletes or moves old mail is switched off during the copy.

▼ **How each tool handles it**

Built-in method	Microsoft's migration tool does not know about retention (MRM) or archive policies. Items they delete or move during the copy are reported as missing. Microsoft strongly recommends turning these policies off before migrating.

Tip: A new Microsoft 365 setup usually has none. Check under Microsoft Purview > Data lifecycle management before the first batch.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

THE PLAN, PHASE BY PHASE

1 Get ready

Before you start

List every mailbox and shared address (such as info@ and accounts@) in a mailbox inventory spreadsheet.

Write down the old host's IMAP server name, port and encryption (usually port 993 with SSL).

Ask the host what IMAP connection limits

apply, and whether it blocks connections from overseas.

Set the TTL (caching time) on your MX record (the DNS setting that tells the internet where to deliver email) to 1 hour.

List everything else that sends email as your domain, such

as website forms and scanners.

> **Watch out:** Some hosts block connections from outside their country, which stops Microsoft reaching the server.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Ask the host to allow it, or use PST export and import (a one-off copy through Outlook on a PC).

Check your DNS records before and after the change

Show the detailed steps (4) →

2 Set up Microsoft 365

Add and verify your domain in the Microsoft 365 admin center.

Leave the MX record unchanged for now, so the old host keeps receiving

mail during the copy.

- Create each user with the address they use today, and assign a licence that includes Exchange Online.
- Create a shared mailbox (one inbox several people use, no licence needed) for each shared address.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

3 Prepare passwords and CSV

Tell users their old email password will change, then reset all of them in one sitting.

Test each password in the old webmail, using app passwords where the host requires them.

Build a CSV file (a plain spreadsheet file) with the

headings EmailAddress, UserName and Password.

Save a pilot CSV with two or three mailboxes, and a second CSV for everyone else.

Store the CSV files encrypted, because they hold live passwords.

> ⚠ **Watch out:** Built-in IMAP batch: it signs in as each user, so it needs every mailbox password.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Reset passwords for the migration, and again after the batch is deleted.
> - Ask whether the host supports an admin sign-in over IMAP. Shared hosting rarely does.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

4 Copy the mail

Create an IMAP migration endpoint (the saved connection to the old server).

Create a migration batch (a group of mailboxes copied together) from the pilot CSV, excluding Junk and Trash.

Ask pilot users to compare their folders in

Outlook on the web with the old webmail.

Run batches for everyone else, starting large ones outside business hours.

Fix any failed user from the error in the batch details.

> ⚠ **Watch out:** Built-in IMAP batch: each mailbox copies up to 500,000 items, newest first, with no date filter. Messages over 35 MB are skipped.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Export older mail from very large mailboxes to PST and import it into the archive mailbox (extra online-only storage).
> - Save attachments from messages over 35 MB by hand.
>
> **TOOLS THAT CAN DO IT**
>
> **CodeTwo Office 365 Migration**
> Filters by date and folder, with delta passes (top-ups) for new mail.

MigrationWiz
Sets the earliest and latest date to migrate. Since 1 October 2026 you must first add its app ID to the tenant's EWS (Exchange Web Services) allow list.

Watch out: Host connection limits slow the copy. Built-in IMAP batch: you can lower how many mailboxes copy at once in the migration endpoint settings, but you cannot limit it to certain hours.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Ask the host to raise its limits, lower the endpoint's concurrent migrations if connections fail, and run several small batches.

TOOLS THAT CAN DO IT

CodeTwo Office 365 Migration
Sets how many mailboxes run at once, handles throttling servers, and schedules jobs overnight.

Show the detailed steps (4) →

5 Move contacts and calendars

Before the old service closes

Export each user's contacts (CSV or vCard) and calendar (.ics) from the old webmail.

Import each calendar in Outlook on the

web under Add calendar > Upload from file.

Import each contacts CSV under People > Import contacts, keeping its column headings.

Recreate mail rules, signatures and forwarding, which do not move either.

> ⓘ **Watch out:** Built-in IMAP batch: contacts, calendars and tasks are not copied, and they are lost when the old account is cancelled.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Export and import by hand as above (free, fine for a few users), and recreate tasks.
>
> **TOOLS THAT CAN DO IT**
>
> **audriga**

Copies contacts and calendars over CardDAV and CalDAV or from Roundcube webmail, where the old host offers them. Test one account first.

Watch out: Imported calendar events do not update if the organiser changes them later.

WAYS AROUND IT

- Ask organisers to resend important recurring meetings from Outlook.

Watch out: Outlook imports contacts from CSV, not vCard (.vcf).

WAYS AROUND IT

- Open the .vcf in a desktop mail client and export it to CSV.

Show the detailed steps (3) →

6 Switch over

After the first copy shows Synced

Replace the old MX record with the Microsoft 365 one, and add the Autodiscover record (which Outlook uses to find settings).

Edit your one

SPF record (the list of services allowed to send as your domain) to include Microsoft 365 and the senders on your list.

Repoint scanners and forms that sent through the old host.

Move Outlook and phones to the new account the

next day, in small groups.

Keep the batch running for at least 72 hours after the MX change.

> **Watch out:** Old IMAP accounts on PCs and phones cannot be converted, so each device downloads the whole mailbox again.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Remove the old account, add the new one, and leave PCs on overnight.

> **Watch out:** Other mail systems can take up to 72 hours to see the new MX, so some mail still reaches the old host.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Leave the batch running: it copies new mail about once a day until you delete it.

Turn this phase into dated tasks with the cutover planner

Show the detailed steps (4) →

7 Check and clean up 72 hours after the switch

Check every batch shows Synced with

no errors, including one sync after the MX change.

Send test emails in and out from an outside account.

Confirm no new mail has reached the old webmail, then delete the batch.

Delete the CSV files, and reset or delete

the passwords they contain.

Take a last export of the old mailboxes, then cancel the old host.

> **Watch out:** Microsoft has no tool to copy mail back to an IMAP server, and cancelling the old host removes its mailboxes.
>
> **WAYS AROUND IT**
>
> - Keep the old host and your saved DNS records until every mailbox is checked.
> - To roll back, restore the old MX and drag new mail back in classic Outlook (the older Outlook for Windows desktop app).

Show the detailed steps (4) →

✓ You are finished when

- Every mailbox shows Synced with no errors, and its folders match the old webmail.
- Outside mail arrives in Microsoft 365, and replies pass SPF, DKIM and DMARC sender checks.
- Every user sends and receives on desktop and phone with the Microsoft 365 account.
- Contacts and calendars are in Outlook, and no new mail has reached the old host since the MX change.

Tools named in this plan are independent third-party products, not endorsed by the platform vendor and not paid placements. Check the tool's own documentation and run a pilot first.

CLICK BY CLICK

What does each step involve?

Open a part when you reach it in the plan. Each step says where to go, what to do and what you should see.

About this migration

What it covers, limits at a glance

IMAP migration copies email from any server that supports IMAP into Exchange Online mailboxes. It suits small businesses leaving shared hosting (cPanel and similar), Zoho Mail and other providers. It is not a full migration: Microsoft states it does not move contacts, calendar items or tasks, so plan to export and import those separately.

If you are moving from Google Workspace, use the Google Workspace guide, which uses Microsoft's dedicated Google migration and moves calendars and contacts too. For Exchange Server, see the Exchange to Exchange Online guide.

NATIVE TOOL
IMAP migration batch in the Exchange admin center

WHAT MOVES
Email in the inbox and other mail folders only

WHAT DOES NOT
Contacts, calendars and tasks

PER-MAILBOX LIMIT
500,000 items, newest first; largest message 35 MB

CSV FILE
Up to 50,000 rows and 10 MB

1 What you need before step one

Need	Details	Where to get it
Microsoft 365 Global Administrator	To add the domain, create users and assign licences. An Exchange Administrator can run the migration steps.	Microsoft 365 admin center, https://admin.microsoft.com
Licences	One licence that includes Exchange Online for each person. Shared mailboxes do not need one.	Microsoft or a partner; check current pricing with them
Source IMAP server details	Server name, port and encryption for the current host.	Find your IMAP settings
Each source mailbox password	IMAP migration signs in as each user. Some hosts need an app password for IMAP.	Your current host's control panel or each user's security settings
DNS access	Login to wherever your DNS is hosted (registrar, web host or DNS provider).	Run `nslookup -type=ns contoso.com` to see who hosts it
Optional: Exchange Online PowerShell	Only if you prefer commands to the admin center.	Connect to Exchange Online PowerShell

2 Create users and mailboxes in Microsoft 365

3 steps —

1

Add and verify your domain

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center (admin.microsoft.com) > Show all > Settings > Domains > Add domain

Type the domain (for example `contoso.com`) and select **Next**. Choose the **TXT record** option and select **Next**. At your DNS host, create a TXT record with exactly the host and `MS=ms...` value the wizard shows, then return and select **Verify**. When the wizard asks how to add DNS records, choose **I'll add the DNS records myself**, then **More Options** > **Skip this for now**. Do not change MX yet: the old host keeps receiving mail during the copy. Full detail: add a domain to Microsoft 365.

```
nslookup -type=TXT contoso.com
```

✓ **You should see:** The domain appears on the Domains page as verified, and nslookup -type=mx still returns the old host's MX record.

2

Create users and assign licences

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Users > Active users > Add a user (one person) or Add multiple users (CSV)

The mailboxes must exist before IMAP migration can copy into them. For each person, select **Add a user**, enter the name, type the username and pick your domain from the domain list so the address matches the one they use today, then select a location and a licence that includes Exchange Online and finish the wizard. For more than a few people, select **Add multiple users**, choose **I'd like to upload a CSV with user information**, download the blank CSV, keep its header row, fill one user per row (up to 249 users per file) and upload it; see bulk create users and assign licences.

✓ **You should see:** Each user is listed on Active users with a licence, and after a few minutes can sign in at https://outlook.office.com to an empty mailbox.

3

Create shared mailboxes for shared accounts

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Teams & groups > Shared mailboxes

Accounts such as info@ or accounts@ are often shared on the old host. Select **+ Add a shared mailbox**, enter a name, edit the email address so it matches the old address, and select **Save changes**. Under **Next steps** select **Add members to this mailbox**, then **Add members**, pick the people and select **Add**. Shared mailboxes do not need a licence.

✓ **You should see:** The shared mailbox is listed on the Shared mailboxes page with its members.

3 Collect source server details and credentials

4 steps

1

Find the IMAP server name and port

Where: Your current host's control panel (cPanel: Email > Email Accounts > Connect Devices; Zoho Mail: Settings > Mail Accounts > your address > IMAP)

Copy the incoming IMAP server name, port and encryption. In cPanel the values are under **Mail Client Manual Settings** > **Secure SSL/TLS Settings**: **Incoming Server** and IMAP port 993. Zoho shows the server under **Server Configurations Details**. Rackspace lists `secure.emailsrvr.com`, port 993, SSL. Use SSL on port 993 where the host supports it. For other providers see find your IMAP settings.

✓ **You should see:** You have a server name (for example mail.contoso-host.com), port 993 and SSL recorded in your mailbox inventory.

2

Get each mailbox password

Where: Your old host's control panel (cPanel: Email > Email Accounts > Manage > Security), and a protected spreadsheet on your admin PC

Most hosts do not offer admin impersonation over IMAP, so you need each user's password. Either collect them securely or set a new password for each mailbox on the old host for the migration. Use app passwords where the host requires them for IMAP (Zoho does when two-factor authentication is on). Test one account by signing in to the host's webmail with the full email address and the password.

✓ **You should see:** Every mailbox in your inventory has a password that opens its webmail.

3

Check connection limits

Where: Your host's support channel (ticket, chat or phone)

Microsoft notes that connection limits on the source (per user, per IP or total) slow migrations. Ask your host what limits apply to IMAP connections and whether they can raise them for the migration period. Ask too whether they block connections from outside your country, which stops Microsoft reaching the server.

✓ **You should see:** A written reply from the host with the limits, and any change they have made.

4

Lower the MX TTL

Where: Your DNS host's control panel > your domain > DNS records > MX record > Edit

Set the TTL on each MX record to 3,600 seconds or less before you start, as Microsoft recommends, and select **Save**. Wait at least as long as the old TTL before the cutover. Full detail: lower DNS TTL before a migration, and the DNS cutover guide.

```
nslookup -type=ns contoso.com
nslookup -debug -type=mx contoso.com
```

✓ **You should see:** The MX record shows a TTL of 3600 or lower in the control panel, and the ttl = line in the nslookup -debug output matches.

4 Build the migration CSV

3 steps

1

Use the exact headers

Where: Excel or Notepad on your admin PC, saved as CSV (for example C:\migration\imap-pilot.csv)

The file needs three columns, with no spaces in the headings: `EmailAddress` (the Microsoft 365 mailbox, as shown on Users > Active users), `UserName` (the IMAP sign-in name) and `Password`. One row per mailbox, up to 50,000 rows and 10 MB. In Excel, use **File** > **Save As** and choose **CSV**. You can also download a CSV with headers from the **Add user mailboxes** page of the batch wizard in Step 5.

```
EmailAddress,UserName,Password
alex@contoso.com,alex@contoso.com,SourcePassword1
sam@contoso.com,sam@contoso.com,SourcePassword2
info@contoso.com,info@contoso.com,SourcePassword3
```

✓ **You should see:** The file opens in Notepad with EmailAddress,UserName,Password on line one and one mailbox per line below it.

2

Protect the file

Where: An encrypted folder or drive on your admin PC

The CSV contains live passwords. Store it encrypted, do not email it, delete it after the migration and reset passwords on the old host when you are done.

✓ **You should see:** Only the migration admin can open the file, and a reminder to delete it is in your cutover runsheet.

3

Split into batches

Where: Your mailbox inventory spreadsheet, then separate CSV files

You do not have to migrate everyone at once. Save a pilot CSV with two or three mailboxes (for example `imap-pilot.csv`), then one or more CSVs for the rest. Keep the same header row in every file.

✓ **You should see:** A pilot CSV and a CSV for the remaining users, each with the same three headings.

5 Create the IMAP migration endpoint

3 steps

1

Create the endpoint in the Exchange admin center

Where: Exchange admin center (admin.exchange.microsoft.com) > Migration > Endpoints (top right) > Add

On the **Add Endpoint** page choose **IMAP**. Enter a **Migration endpoint name** (for example `HostIMAP`) and in **IMAP server** type the server from Step 2. Leave the other settings at their defaults, which Microsoft says work in most cases, and select **Create**. Full detail: create a migration endpoint.

✓ **You should see:** The new endpoint appears in the Endpoints list. If creation fails, the server name, port or security is wrong, or the host blocks the connection.

2

Or create the endpoint in Exchange Online PowerShell

Where: PowerShell on your admin PC, connected with Connect-ExchangeOnline

If the module is not installed yet, follow connect to Exchange Online PowerShell. Run the commands with your server name. The default port is 993; valid security values are None, Ssl and Tls.

```
Connect-ExchangeOnline -UserPrincipalName admin@contoso.com
New-MigrationEndpoint -IMAP -Name HostIMAP -RemoteServer mail.contoso-host.com -Port 993 -Security Ssl
```

✓ **You should see:** PowerShell returns the endpoint with EndpointType IMAP and your RemoteServer.

3

Check the endpoint

Where: The same PowerShell session

Confirm it was created and note its name for the batch.

```
Get-MigrationEndpoint | Format-List Identity,EndpointType,RemoteServer,Port
```

✓ **You should see:** A list entry with Identity HostIMAP, EndpointType IMAP, your server name and Port 993.

6 Create and run the IMAP migration batch

4 steps —

1

Create the batch in the Exchange admin center

Where: Exchange admin center (admin.exchange.microsoft.com) > Migration > Add migration batch

Type a batch name with no spaces or special characters (for example `IMAPPilot`), choose **Migrate to Exchange Online** and select **Next**. Select **IMAP migration**, **Next**, confirm the prerequisites page and select **Next**. On **Set a migration endpoint** pick `HostIMAP`. On **Add user mailboxes** select **Import CSV file** and upload the pilot CSV. On **Select configuration settings**, use **Migration filtering options** to exclude folders such as Junk or Trash if you wish. On **Schedule batch migration** choose to start the batch automatically, then select **Save** and **Done**. Full detail: create a migration batch.

✓ **You should see:** The batch appears on the Migration page with status Syncing.

2

Or create it in PowerShell

Where: PowerShell on your admin PC, connected with Connect-ExchangeOnline

The CSV is read in as bytes. The batch starts straight away with `-AutoStart`.

```
New-MigrationBatch -Name IMAPPilot -SourceEndpoint HostIMAP -CSVData
([System.IO.File]::ReadAllBytes("C:\migration\imap-pilot.csv")) -AutoStart
```

✓ **You should see:** PowerShell returns the batch with its Identity and a status of Syncing or Starting.

3

Monitor progress

Where: Exchange admin center > Migration > select the batch > Migration details > View details, or the same PowerShell session

Check per-user status and errors. If a user fails, check the mailbox status report and that the EmailAddress column holds the correct Microsoft 365 address.

```
Get-MigrationUser -BatchId IMAPPilot | Get-MigrationUserStatistics | Format-Table
Identity,Status,SyncedItemCount,Error
```

✓ **You should see:** The batch reaches Synced, each user shows a SyncedItemCount, and the Error column is empty.

4

Check the pilot

Where: Outlook on the web (https://outlook.office.com), signed in as each pilot user

Ask pilot users to sign in, set their time zone if prompted, and compare folders and recent messages with the old webmail. Then repeat the batch steps above with the CSV for everyone else.

✓ **You should see:** The same folders and recent messages as on the old host, and all remaining batches at Synced.

Ongoing sync. After the first copy, the batch keeps synchronising new mail from the old host (Microsoft says about once a day) until you delete it. That covers mail that arrives at the old host before MX changes.

7 Move contacts and calendars separately

3 steps −

Item	Moved by IMAP migration?	How to move it
Email in inbox and folders	Yes	IMAP batch
Contacts	No	Export from the old webmail or client as CSV or vCard, import in Outlook
Calendars	No	Export as .ics, import into the Outlook calendar
Tasks and notes	No	Recreate, or use a third-party tool
Rules, signatures, forwarding	No	Recreate in Outlook
Messages over 35 MB	No	Save attachments manually

1

Export contacts and calendars from the old host

Where: The old host's webmail, signed in as each user (Roundcube on cPanel; Zoho Mail Contacts and Zoho Calendar)

Have users or IT export before the old service closes:

- **Roundcube**: in **Contacts** select the address book and use **Export** (vCard); in **Calendar** open the calendar options and export (.ics). Labels vary by Roundcube version.
- **Zoho Mail**: open the **Contacts** app, select **More Actions** > **Export**, choose Personal Contacts, pick **Outlook CSV** and select **Export Contacts**. In Zoho Calendar go to **Settings** > **Import/Export** > **Export**, pick the calendar, choose **ICS** and select **Export**.
- **Other hosts**: use the provider's own export help.

✓ **You should see:** A contacts file (.csv or .vcf) and an .ics calendar file for each user on your computer.

2

Import calendars into Outlook

Where: Outlook on the web (https://outlook.office.com) > Calendar > Add calendar > Upload from file

Select **Browse**, choose the .ics file, pick the calendar to import into and select **Import**.

✓ **You should see:** The events appear in the chosen calendar. Microsoft notes they do not update if the source changes later.

3

Import contacts into Outlook

Where: Outlook on the web or new Outlook for Windows > People

Select **Import contacts**, then **Browse**, choose the CSV file, select **Open** and then **Import**. Microsoft's steps use a CSV file and say Outlook needs the column headings in the first row, so do not change them. If you only have a .vcf file, open it in a desktop mail client that reads vCard and export the contacts to CSV first.

✓ **You should see:** The contacts are listed on the user's People page.

8 Change MX and finish

4 steps −

1

Point MX to Microsoft 365

Where: Microsoft 365 admin center > Settings > Domains > your domain > DNS records (to copy values), then your DNS host's control panel > DNS records

Copy the MX **Points to address** (it ends in `mail.protection.outlook.com`) and the Autodiscover CNAME exactly as the admin center shows them. At your DNS host add the new MX record with priority 1 (or the value shown), add the Autodiscover CNAME, then delete the old host's MX records. Edit the existing SPF TXT record rather than adding a second one, for example `v=spf1 include:spf.protection.outlook.com -all`. Full detail: change MX records and set up SPF.

```
nslookup -type=mx contoso.com 8.8.8.8
nslookup -type=txt contoso.com 8.8.8.8
```

✓ **You should see:** Lookups return only the Microsoft MX value, and the domain shows no missing records on the Domains page.

2

Wait at least 72 hours

Where: Exchange admin center > Migration > select the batch > View details

Microsoft says it can take up to 72 hours for other mail systems to recognise the new MX record, and the batch syncs about once a day. Let the batch keep running for at least 72 hours before you delete it, and check that at least one sync has completed after the MX change.

✓ **You should see:** The batch still shows Synced, with a last-synced time after the MX change.

3

Delete the batch

Where: Exchange admin center > Migration > select the batch > Delete, or PowerShell connected with Connect-ExchangeOnline

Once mail is arriving in Microsoft 365, delete the batch. After deletion, mail that reaches the old host is no longer copied.

```
Remove-MigrationBatch -Identity IMAPPilot
```

✓ **You should see:** The batch is no longer listed on the Migration page.

4

Keep the old service briefly

Where: Your old host's control panel and billing page

Keep the old host active for a short period so you can recover anything missed, then cancel it and remove its remaining DNS records. Reset or delete the passwords you used in the CSV and delete the CSV.

✓ **You should see:** No new mail arrives at the old host, and the old service is cancelled on the date in your runsheet.

WORTH KNOWING

What can go wrong, and how do you avoid it?

The detail behind the plan: options compared, and what experienced engineers check first. Tap any item.

Compare all the ways to do this 3 options −

IMAP migration batch in Exchange Online

MEDIUM EFFORT

Best for: Any IMAP host reachable from the internet, where you can supply each mailbox password

+ Built into Exchange Online and run from the Exchange admin center or PowerShell
+ Keeps syncing new mail about once a day until you delete the batch
+ One CSV can hold up to 50,000 rows
– Microsoft states it does not move contacts, calendar items or tasks
– Limits of 500,000 items per mailbox and 35 MB per message
– Needs each source password, which usually means a planned reset

Read more →

PST export and import

HIGH EFFORT

Best for: Oversized or problem mailboxes, hosts that block migration connections, or data already held in Outlook

+ Does not depend on the host accepting Microsoft's IMAP connection
+ Calendars and contacts in the Outlook profile come across in the same file
– A one-off copy with no ongoing sync
– Needs Outlook on a PC for each export and careful handling of the files

Read more →

Third-party mailbox migration service

MEDIUM EFFORT

Best for: Hosts where native IMAP migration falls short, or projects that need vendor support

+ Options such as BitTitan MigrationWiz and CodeTwo are built for moves into Microsoft 365
+ Can take on mailboxes the native batch struggles with
– Extra product and licences: check the vendor's current pricing
– Confirm the vendor supports your source host and data types first

OUR ADVICE

Start with the native IMAP batch: it costs nothing extra and keeps syncing until cutover. Use PST for the few mailboxes that break the limits, and bring in a third-party service only if a pilot shows the host cannot handle the native migration. If the source is Google Workspace or Exchange, use the dedicated guides instead, because those tools also move calendars and contacts.

Trim what you copy before the first batch

SAVES TIME –

Microsoft's IMAP migration copies up to 500,000 items per mailbox, newest first, and skips messages over 35 MB. Old Junk, Trash and huge sent-items folders cost sync time on every pass and still fail the size limit.

WHAT TO DO

Ask users to empty Trash and Junk on the old host. In the batch wizard, use **Migration filtering options** to exclude those folders. For mailboxes near the item limit, export older mail to PST and import it into the archive instead.

TOOLS THAT CAN GET AROUND THIS

Microsoft's IMAP batch has no date filter: it copies every item it can, newest first, up to the 500,000-item cap. CodeTwo Office 365 Migration and MigrationWiz can also filter by item date, so you can move recent mail first and bring older mail across in a later pass, or leave it behind. Both still read the mailbox over IMAP, so they move mail only.

CodeTwo Office 365 Migration

IMAP source with a time filter that excludes items older or newer than a set date, folder filters and delta passes for new mail.

MigrationWiz

Advanced Options set the earliest and latest date to migrate, plus RegEx folder filters. For Exchange Online, add your MigrationWiz app ID to the tenant's EWS allow list first: since 1 October 2026 Microsoft blocks EWS for apps not on it.

Third-party tools, not endorsed by the platform vendor. Confirm in the tool's documentation and run a pilot first.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365

Turn shared logins into shared mailboxes, not licensed users

COST LEVER

Small hosts often have info@, sales@ and accounts@ as separate logins that several people share. Licensing each one adds cost and keeps a shared password in circulation.

WHAT TO DO

Mark each shared address in your inventory and create it under **Teams & groups** > **Shared mailboxes**, with members added. Shared mailboxes do not need a licence. Point the CSV row's EmailAddress at the shared mailbox.

Microsoft Learn: Create a shared mailbox

Plan the password reset and tell users first

USER IMPACT

IMAP migration signs in as each user, so you usually reset old-host passwords. Users whose phones still use the old password get repeated sign-in prompts or lock themselves out.

WHAT TO DO

Send the change notice before you reset. Reset all passwords in one sitting, record them only in the encrypted CSV, and reset them again after the batch is deleted. Microsoft supports admin credentials only on servers set up for it (for example a Dovecot master user), which shared hosting rarely offers.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate other types of IMAP mailboxes

Work within the host's connection limits

SAVES TIME

Microsoft notes that source limits on connections per user, per IP or in total slow IMAP migrations. Shared hosting often has tight limits, and a big batch can be throttled or flagged as abuse.

WHAT TO DO

Ask the host for its IMAP limits before you start. Run several small batches rather than one large one, and start the big ones outside business hours.

TOOLS THAT CAN GET AROUND THIS

Once started, Microsoft's IMAP batch runs until it finishes. CodeTwo Office 365 Migration lets you set how many mailboxes migrate at once, has a throttling step in its IMAP source settings for servers that throttle connections, and has a Scheduler that runs jobs only in the time periods you choose, such as overnight.

CodeTwo Office 365 Migration

Sets mailboxes migrated at once, adjusts to IMAP servers that throttle, and schedules jobs into chosen time windows.

Third-party tools, not endorsed by the platform vendor. Confirm in the tool's documentation and run a pilot first.

Export contacts and calendars while the old service is open

USER IMPACT

IMAP migration moves mail folders only. Contacts, calendars and tasks stay behind, and they are lost when the hosting account is cancelled.

WHAT TO DO

Add a contacts and calendar export per user to your runsheet before cutover, and keep the files with the migration records. Recurring meetings imported from .ics do not update if the organiser changes them later, so ask organisers to resend important series from Outlook.

TOOLS THAT CAN GET AROUND THIS

The native import copies mail only. audriga also migrates contacts and calendars into Microsoft 365, reading them from the old host over CardDAV and CalDAV or from supported webmail such as Roundcube. It only works where the old host exposes that data, so test one account first.

audriga

Migration service for email, contacts and calendars from IMAP servers, CardDAV and CalDAV systems and Horde, Roundcube or SquirrelMail webmail. Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace are among its supported systems.

Third-party tools, not endorsed by the platform vendor. Confirm in the tool's documentation and run a pilot first.

Microsoft Support: Import or subscribe to a calendar in Outlook on the web

Find everything else that sends mail for the domain

REDUCES RISK

Website forms, invoicing tools, scanners and printers often send through the old host. After cutover they fail SPF or keep delivering into the old mailboxes.

WHAT TO DO

List every sender in your inventory. Add each legitimate service to the single SPF record, and repoint devices that relayed through the old host's SMTP server to Microsoft 365 or the service's own relay.

Microsoft Learn: Set up SPF

Expect Outlook and phones to start again

PERFORMANCE

An IMAP account in Outlook or on a phone cannot be converted to a Microsoft 365 account. The new account downloads the whole mailbox again, which loads slow office links.

WHAT TO DO

Book the device changeover for the day after MX moves, in small groups. Remove the old IMAP account, add the Microsoft 365 account, and leave PCs on overnight to finish the first download.

Keep a rollback path until the batch is deleted

REDUCES RISK

Until you delete the batch, the old host still holds a full copy and keeps receiving mail from senders with a cached MX. Microsoft says other systems can take up to 72 hours to see the new MX.

WHAT TO DO

Lower the MX TTL first, keep your saved DNS records, and do not cancel the old service until 72 hours after the MX change and a final check of each mailbox. Take a last export of the old mailboxes for your records before cancelling.

Microsoft Learn: Migrate other types of IMAP mailboxes

FINISH SAFELY

How do you check it worked, or roll back?

Full validation checklist

8 checks

Run these before you declare the migration complete. Record the results in the data validation report.

Check	How to check	What good looks like
Every migration user synced without errors	For each batch run `Get-MigrationUser -BatchId IMAPPilot | Get-MigrationUserStatistics | Format-Table Identity,Status,SyncedItemCount,Error`, or open **Exchange admin center > Migration > select the batch > View details**.	Every mailbox in your inventory is Synced with an empty Error column.
Item counts and folders match the old mailbox	Compare **SyncedItemCount** with the message counts or mailbox sizes your old host shows, then sign in to Outlook on the web as a sample of users and compare folders and recent mail with the old webmail.	All folders are present, and missing items are only ones you expected (over the 35 MB message limit, beyond 500,000 items, or deliberately excluded).

Check	How to check	What good looks like
Shared mailboxes and their members work	From an outside account, send a test to each shared mailbox. Ask each member to open it from Outlook and check **Microsoft 365 admin center > Teams & groups > Shared mailboxes** for the member list.	Every shared address receives mail and every intended member can open and send from it.
DNS records are healthy	In the Microsoft 365 admin center open **Settings > Domains > your domain > DNS records**, and run `nslookup -type=mx contoso.com 8.8.8.8` and `nslookup -type=txt contoso.com 8.8.8.8`.	MX ends in mail.protection.outlook.com, Autodiscover is present, there is one SPF record including spf.protection.outlook.com, and the admin center shows no errors.
Mail flows in and out	Send test messages from outside providers to a sample of users and reply. Trace them in **Exchange admin center > Mail flow > Message trace**, and check the headers of a reply at the outside mailbox for SPF, DKIM and DMARC results.	Inbound mail arrives within minutes, and replies pass SPF, DKIM and DMARC.
Contacts and calendars imported	Open Outlook on the web as a sample of users and check **Calendar** and **People** against the exports from the old host.	Upcoming events and contacts are present for every user who had them.
Outlook and phones connect to Microsoft 365	Ask each user to confirm their Outlook profile and phone use the Microsoft 365 account and the old IMAP account has been removed.	Every user sends and receives on desktop and phone, and no device still sends through the old host.

Check	How to check	What good looks like
The old host has stopped receiving mail	After at least 72 hours, sign in to the old webmail as a sample of users and check the newest message dates before you delete the batch.	No new message reaches the old host after the MX change.

Rollback plan

If it goes wrong

ROLL BACK IF

- Outside mail is not arriving in Microsoft 365 after the MX change
- The pilot batch fails for most mailboxes and the host cannot raise connection limits or fix the cause before cutover
- Large numbers of folders or messages are missing when you compare Outlook on the web with the old webmail
- Users cannot sign in to Microsoft 365 on cutover day

POINT OF NO RETURN

The IMAP batch copies mail and leaves the source untouched, so you can switch back while the old service is active. After you delete the batch, nothing reaching the old host is copied any more. The real point of no return is cancelling the old host, because its mailboxes are then removed on the host's schedule. Microsoft has no tool to copy mail from Microsoft 365 back to an IMAP server, so mail received in Microsoft 365 after the MX change has to be moved by hand.

1

Restore the old MX record

Where: Your DNS host's control panel > DNS records

Add back the old MX record from your DNS cutover record sheet and delete the record ending in mail.protection.outlook.com. Remove the Autodiscover CNAME if the old host relied on its own autoconfig records.

```
nslookup -type=mx contoso.com 8.8.8.8
```

✓ **You should see:** Public resolvers return the old MX record.

2

Restore SPF for the old host

Where: Your DNS host > DNS records > the v=spf1 TXT record > Edit

Make sure the single SPF record includes the old host again. You can leave Microsoft 365 in it while you decide on a retry.

✓ **You should see:** Mail sent from the old host passes SPF at an outside mailbox.

3

Stop the batch

Where: Exchange admin center > Migration > select the batch, or Exchange Online PowerShell

Stop the batch so it stops syncing, but keep the Microsoft 365 mailboxes for a later attempt.

```
Stop-MigrationBatch -Identity IMAPPilot
```

✓ **You should see:** The batch shows as stopped.

4

Reconnect users to the old host

Where: Each user's Outlook profile and phone, or the old webmail

Re-add the old IMAP account or tell users to use the old webmail, and give them the password you set for the migration if you changed it.

✓ **You should see:** Users send and receive from the old mailboxes.

5

Move back mail received in Microsoft 365

Where: Classic Outlook with both the Microsoft 365 and old IMAP accounts added

For each affected user, drag messages that arrived in Microsoft 365 after the MX change into the old IMAP inbox.

✓ **You should see:** Messages from the cutover window appear in the old webmail.

Agree the triggers and who decides before the go / no-go meeting. Use the rollback plan template.

Common problems and fixes

6 errors −

`Authentication failed for a user in the IMAP batch`

Cause: Wrong password in the CSV, the account needs an app password, or IMAP is disabled for the account on the old host.

Fix: Check the sign-in in a desktop mail client, enable IMAP, use an app password if required, then update the CSV and retry.

`The IMAP server could not be reached when creating the endpoint`

Cause: Wrong server name, port or security setting, or the host blocks the connection.

Fix: Confirm the IMAP server name and port with your host, test with -Security Ssl on port 993, and ask the host about firewall or geo-blocking.

`Mailbox does not exist for a CSV row`

Cause: The EmailAddress column points to an address with no Exchange Online mailbox.

Fix: Create and license the user first, or fix the address in the CSV.

`Some items skipped or missing`

Cause: Messages over 35 MB, or mailboxes with more than 500,000 items, exceed Microsoft's IMAP limits.

Fix: Save large attachments manually. For very large mailboxes, archive older mail separately, for example as PST.

`Migration is very slow`

Cause: The source host limits concurrent IMAP connections.

Fix: Ask the host to raise connection limits, migrate in smaller batches, or run batches outside business hours.

`CSV upload rejected`

Cause: Column headings are wrong or contain spaces.

Fix: Use exactly EmailAddress, UserName and Password in the first row.

Search the full error library →

FAQ

Frequently asked questions

Does IMAP migration move contacts and calendars?

No. Microsoft states IMAP migration only moves items in the inbox and other mail folders. Export and import contacts and calendars separately.

How many mailboxes can I migrate with IMAP?

A single migration CSV can include up to 50,000 mailboxes and be up to 10 MB. Run several batches if you prefer.

What is the largest email IMAP migration can move?

Microsoft lists a 35 MB maximum message size and up to 500,000 items per mailbox, migrated newest to oldest.

Do I need users' passwords?

Usually yes, unless your host supports admin access over IMAP. Reset or collect passwords, and reset them again after the migration.

When should I change the MX record?

After the first sync completes. Keep the batch running for at least 72 hours after the change, then delete it.

Can I migrate from Gmail with IMAP?

You can, but for Google Workspace Microsoft provides a dedicated migration that also moves calendars and contacts. See the Google Workspace guide.

SOURCES

Official sources

11 official pages this guide is based on

Vendors change limits and features, so confirm details on the source before you rely on them. Last checked 4 Nov 2026.

Microsoft Learn: Set up SPF

- Microsoft Learn: Migrate your IMAP mailboxes to Microsoft 365
- Microsoft Learn: Migrate other types of IMAP mailboxes
- Microsoft Learn: New-MigrationEndpoint
- Microsoft Learn: Decide on a migration path
- Microsoft Learn: Add a domain to Microsoft 365
- Microsoft Learn: Create a shared mailbox
- Microsoft Support: Import or export contacts in Outlook using a .csv file
- Microsoft Support: Import or subscribe to a calendar in Outlook on the web
- cPanel Docs: Set Up Mail Client
- Zoho Mail Help: IMAP access