

Why email recall is unlikely to work

Microsoft Outlook has a recall feature that allows you to remove or replace an email from the recipient's mailbox after it has been sent in error. Unfortunately, this is frequently unsuccessful and there are many reasons why the recall feature may not work for you. While the feature can help in some circumstances, if you have sent an email in error, the recall feature is not a solution to the issue and the incident must still be reported to the Data Protection Team.

Reasons why an email recall will fail:

1. The recipient is not part of NCG's Network

To successfully recall an email from your work email address, the recipient's email address must be within the NCG network. When an email is incorrectly sent to a mailbox that is not part of the NCG network, the recall option will fail.

2. The recipient has already read the email

If you attempt to recall the email after the recipient has already opened it, they will receive an email informing them that you would like to recall, however the email that you have attempted to recall will remain in their inbox as a read message. This is why it is important to recall the email as soon as possible. This also applies if the recipient has read the email from a mobile device.

3. The recipient has an email rule which moves emails to different folders

The recipient may have an Outlook rule set up that automatically diverts emails received into a folder other than their inbox. The recall feature only has the ability to search the recipient's inbox and will therefore not see the email that you wish to be recalled.

4. The recipient does not use Outlook

There are lots of different mail clients that are used other than Outlook such as Gmail, Yahoo, Apple Mail, Mozilla Thunderbird and many more. If your recipient is using a different mail client to Outlook, then the recall will fail. This is also true when the recipient is signed into a mobile device using a mail client other than Outlook (examples include Apple mail, Gmail, Samsung mail etc.)

5. The recipient uses Outlook Web Access

Outlook Web Access (OWA) is a web-based version of Outlook that is accessed through the browser on your computer instead of the Outlook desktop application. If the recipient is using OWA, then the recall will not work.

6. You sent the email from a Shared Mailbox

It is not possible to recall an email that has been sent from a shared mailbox, the feature will only work if the email has been sent from a user's primary mailbox.

Sometimes you may get the Outlook Recall reported as a success even though the recipient has read the original message. The Recall tracking feature is accurate, but it is not perfect, and sometimes things can occur that may cause it to provide a "recall success" message when the recipient still read the original message. It is better to think of it more as a "probably successful" message. In instances where you suspect that a data breach has occurred in the email that you have sent, it is important that you still report this to the Data Protection Team even if you get a "recall success" message.

Examples of data breaches include sending personal data in email to the wrong recipient or using the To/CC function instead of Bcc to hide personal email addresses.

Most people realise the mistake that they have made immediately after sending their email. One solution could be to set up a rule in your Outlook that delays the email being sent for a few minutes (you can set this up to 120 minutes if you wish). You can tailor this to apply to all emails that you send or emails to specific recipients. With this rule in place, after you press send on the email, it will sit in your outbox for the allocated amount of time before being sent. This gives you a chance to go into your outbox and correct the mistake before it is too late. If this sounds useful, please see the link below for details.

[Delay or schedule sending email messages](#)

Another solution is to just take a moment before sending an email. Take your hands from the keyboard and take just a moment to look at the names of the recipients. This might sound like it will slow you down in your busy day, but the time it takes is nothing in comparison with the time you and your manager may have to spend dealing with the fallout from a data security incident and helping the Data Protection Team with their investigation.