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Picture: Brendan HesseÉ is not an exaggeration to assume that you probably use Gmail — it seems that most of the world does these days. This reality has created consternation about some of the recent privacy and security changes to Gmail and Google Chrome. This is not a sudden pivot. For years, Gmail and Chrome have changed from what was once some of the most flexible and open internet tools out there, to something more closed —and in some cases less secure. These privacy concerns are part of an era of data security risks that go deeper than just Google, and for some, it's a matter of privacy for various government agencies. However, frightening and troubling as the government having access to our data may be, most people are not on the NSA radar. And if they are, it doesn't matter what email service you use. Instead, the real privacy threats of most people are companies and private entities that want to buy, sell and mine their data. Let's release a random example: say, maybe Google data mining your inbox so it can advertise better for you, for example? We don't blame you if you want to put an end to this, so let's look at the best Gmail alternatives currently available. Is Gmail that bad? To be fair, while this post is anti-Google by nature (to the extent that we're trying to trade your proprietary email service for something else), there's still a lot of merit in using Gmail and other Google services — this post was actually widely crafted in Google Docs. The point here is not necessarily to spell doom and gloom about Google or its privacy practices, but rather to give viable alternatives that can address a number of shortcomings that Gmail has overall. In the following sections, you'll find paid and free alternatives that cover everything from enhanced security features to deep personalization tools for users and private companies. The real privacy threats of most people are companies and private entities that want to buy, sell and mine their data. Paid alternatives Why pay for an alternative to something that is free? Well, because these email services do as much, if not more, as Gmail does, but without ad support and with stronger privacy defenses. Also, you won't spend more than an average of \$5 or \$6 per month through most of these services. If you're after an updated email solution, sacrificing a cup of coffee every month is probably worth it. A quick warning that applies to most services here: If the email client you are interested in does not track your data, it also does not save your password. Be sure to keep this somewhere secure and, if necessary, set up redundancy accounts just in case. Kolab NowScreenshot: Kolab NowEsis Swiss-based company has perhaps the most attractive and competitive alternative to Gmail currently available (and the Office Suite, for this matter). Users will have access not only to an email service, but to an entire package of ad-free online apps such as calendars, file publishers, and more, that can be synced to all your devices and accessed collaboratively as in Google Docs. Any privacy concerns you've had with Gmail are discussed with Kolab Now. Kolab Now not only ensures that your data and files are safe from the prying eyes of companies, but email servers are also hosted in Switzerland, a country with incredibly strict data privacy laws. The service only saves debug report records when needed—otherwise it is fully practical. Also, the whole thing was built into open source software. Two packages are available, an Individual plan (about \$4.56 per month based on currency conversion) that includes all of the above-mentioned features, and a Group plan (about \$5.56 per user per month) that adds custom domain support, administration tools, and support for up to 100 users in a single plan. You can test any option with a 30-day free trial, too. Proton MailProton Mail is another Swiss company, but focuses only on secure email rather than the software package that Kolab Now provides. Users can sign up completely anonymously, all emails are fully encrypted end-to-end, and no IP information is tracked by the service —and because it's hosted in Switzerland, your email server is off limits. In addition to the web-based client, there are also Proton Mail apps available for Android on iOS, and all of them are built from open source programs and feature the same iron-coated security and encryption. Users can sign up for a free account, which provides up to 500MB of storage for a single user, but imposes a daily limit of 150 messages and truncated technical support. However, the paid options are much more attractive: Plus: \$5 per month, or \$48 per year. Includes single-user support, 5 addresses, 5GB storage, up to 1,000 messages per day, email files and autoresponder features, and better technical support. Professional: \$8 per month, or \$75 per year. Supports up to 5,000 users, 5 addresses per user, 5 GB storage per user, unlimited messages and folders, and priority technical support. Visionary: \$30 per month or \$288 per year. It supports only a maximum of 6 users, 50 addresses and 20GB of total storage, but adds protonVPN access, plus all professional-level features. You can also opt for additional storage, addresses, and domains at additional monthly prices. FastMailScreenshot: Fast MailFastMail is a service very popular email, and probably the first name you'll see mentioned if you're looking for a serious paid alternative to Gmail. The service provides full mobile synchronization for push notifications and contacts, plus live technical support on each of your subscription packages, which are priced as follows: Basic: \$3 per month or \$30 annually, per userStandard: \$5 per month or \$50 annually, per \$9 per month or \$90 per year per user. There is a 30-day test, but only for the Standard option, and covers only a maximum of five users. The Basic package grants you 2GB of storage per user, while Standard and Professional offer 25GB and 100GB, respectively. Professional subscribers will also have unlimited archival space and data retention. One thing to keep in mind is that \$5 and \$9 subscribers can use their own domain addresses, while \$3 users can only use Freemail addresses. The company recycles @freemail addresses if it's no longer in use—so if you cancel your free mail account, someone else might end it. While unlikely, this presents a potential privacy concern, so if you can use your own domain, we recommend doing so. No matter which package you choose, Fast Mail doesn't track any of your data, or use ads. During some of the options here include business options, and in some cases are tailored specifically for them, Tutanota is primarily for individuals or smaller groups, and its prices reflect this. Users start by creating a free account, which includes 1GB of mailbox storage and a Tutanota domain address. From there, you can upgrade your account to Premium accounts (about \$1.20 to \$1.40 per month) or Pro (about \$5.88 to \$7.06 per month), plus the ability to further customize your subscription with expandable storage and more codenames. In addition to price flexibility, the main attraction here is security. Like Proton Mail, Tutanota provides end-to-end encryption in your emails. It hosts your emails in Germany, which benefits from the EU's stricter data laws than the ones we have in the US. Zoho MailScreenshot: The MailZoho zoho email is built primarily around business needs rather than individuals (although free email-only accounts are available to individuals). As such, Zoho Workplace's \$3 monthly package includes cross-account access to Zoho Office Suite for all subscribers, which provides editing applications for documents, spreadsheets and slideshows, password-protected sharing, cloud storage, and the Zoho Cliq live messaging app. The \$8 per month professional level sweetens the agreement with three other applications: Zoho Meeting for video conferencing, Zoho Connect for task management (such as Trello or Asana), and zoho showtime remote meeting software. There are free email-only accounts available, which support up to five users restricting users to a single domain address, a 25 MB limit for attachment sizes, 5GB of storage per user, and can only be accessed of the web client. Microsoft Exchange OnlineYeah, we know —switching from Gmail to Microsoft is not a big change, but in terms of software packages, data and analytics, and overall power, Microsoft Server Exchange is a definite competitor. You will shell out \$12.50 per month per user, but you will be microsoft office and services suite, as well as email services. Business class email-only options are also available—the \$4 monthly subscription provides 50GB mailbox storage per user, while paying \$8 per month will give you 100GB per user. Free alternativesWhen it comes to free email options, few can match Gmail in terms of breadth of features, flexibility, and omnipresence. However, instead of ship jumping to something like Yahoo, we recommend looking at the free packages available from some of the above companies, specifically Tutanota, Proton Mail and Zoho Mail. The only other free option we recommend is iCloud. Apple has a much easier-to-use privacy policy when it comes to data collection. It is also available on virtually all iOS and Apple devices and provides much of the same functionality as other Google Drive services. If you want to do everything and swap platforms entirely, going from Google Drive to iCloud is not a bad idea. It won't give you the same level of flexibility or privacy as some of these luxury Swiss options, but it's a viable alternative nonetheless. Screenshot: AppleOtherwise, what's left are the other guys from the email world: AOL, Yahoo, Outlook, AOL, Mail.com, GMX, Yandex, etc. These options are supported by ads, hosted in the U.S., Russia, or other countries with softer data privacy laws, and most are owned by larger companies with their own potentially skeevey tracking practices. So yes, AOL, Outlook and Yahoo may technically be viable free alternatives to Gmail in the most basic sense, but it would be naive to say that they don't come with their own major red flags —Yahoo, for example, seems to have a rocky track record when it comes to keeping its users' data safe from hackers. Still, if you're on Gmail and just want something new, these will give you it for free. Host your own email serverThere is one last option to consider, and this is to host your own email server. If you're considering this option, you're a brave soul. Hosting an email server can be a complicated and challenging project that requires at least an intermediate familiarity with the Linux operating system (specifically Ubuntu), server software, and PC hardware. There is a service, called Mail-in-a-Box, that aims to make the process much easier to set up and alleviate some of the hardware requirements that running your own email server entails. Screenshot: Mail-in-a-BoxAs you want, although Mail-in-a-box simplifies much of the process, the entire project still takes several hours, and this does not include the time required to build the server's own computer. Also, if you try Mail-in-a-box, note the objectives of the project, as indicated by the creators on the official page: Make it easy to deploy a good email server. Promoting decentralisation, innovation and privacy in Web. Have automated, auditable and idempotent configuration of the system. Don't make a server totally inhackable, NSA-proof (but see our security practices). Do not make something customizable by power users. These last two are important, especially if they conflict with their ultimate goal behind running a private email server. Technically there are methods to create an email server that approaches a digital Fort Knox, but only seriously qualified users should try something like this. In fact, unless you came here specifically looking for tips on how to set up your own private email server, it's best to leave this to the pros. Professionals.