

THE INBOX TRIAGE ROUTINE

Every weekday at 8am, AI labels whatever slipped through my Gmail filters – and never touches anything it shouldn't. The taxonomy, the instructions, and the guardrails.

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AI doesn't replace your email filters – it catches what slips through them. Mine runs every weekday morning, applies an 8-label taxonomy to the strays, and operates under guardrails strict enough that I never worry about it: label only, never archive, never mark read, never touch the protected stuff.

01 BUILD YOUR 8-LABEL TAXONOMY

Mine, genericized – rename to fit your world, but keep it to ~8. More than that and nothing gets found again:

LABEL	WHAT GOES IN IT
Projects & Vendors	The people building things for you – contractors, invoices, change orders
Internal	Your organization's own mail – leadership, finance, HR, committees
Funding & Grants	Agencies, applications, letters of support, signature requests
Leads & Inquiries	Real prospects and requests – the mail that makes money if answered fast
Events & Webinars	Conferences, trainings, industry sessions
Vendors & Promos	SaaS marketing, sales pitches, travel deals
Notifications	Confirmations, security alerts, calendar agendas, bank alerts
Personal	The non-work mail that lands in the work inbox anyway

Newsletters route to topic labels you already read from (e.g. "Industry News," "AI News") instead of a graveyard label.

02 THE ROUTINE INSTRUCTIONS – STEAL THIS

FILL IN THE BRACKETS, SCHEDULE FOR WEEKDAY MORNINGS

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Triage my [WORK] inbox ([your@email]) using the Gmail connector.
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SAFETY CHECK FIRST: list the account's labels. If my labels [LIST YOUR 8 LABELS] do NOT exist, you are connected to the wrong account – stop, apply no labels, and report it.
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My filters already auto-label known senders, so only handle what slipped through:
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1. Search threads from the last 24 hours (72 hours on Monday) that have none of my 8 labels.
2. Label each using this taxonomy:
 - [LABEL 1] – [what belongs here, with example senders/domains]
 - [LABEL 2] – [...]
 - [... all 8, plus newsletter routing rules]
3. NEVER touch or apply [PROTECTED]/* labels (they feed my other automations). Never archive or mark anything read – label only.
4. If a sender genuinely fits nothing, leave it unlabeled and mention it in the summary.

03 THE FOUR GUARDRAILS (THESE TRANSFER TO ANY EMAIL AUTOMATION)

- 01 Safety check first.** Before acting, the routine verifies it's in the right account by checking that your labels exist. Wrong account → stop and report, not improvise.
- 02 Reversible operations only.** Labeling can be undone in one click. Archiving, deleting, and marking-read change what you'll see – so they're banned.
- 03 Protect the machinery.** If other automations key off certain labels, name them as untouchable. Automations that edit each other's triggers is how systems quietly break.
- 04 Honest fallback.** "If it fits nothing, leave it and tell me" beats forced categorization. The unlabeled report also tells you when your taxonomy needs a new bucket.

The goal isn't inbox zero. It's that at 8:05 every morning, everything in the inbox is already sorted into "what kind of thing is this" – and you spend attention only on the mail that deserves it.

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