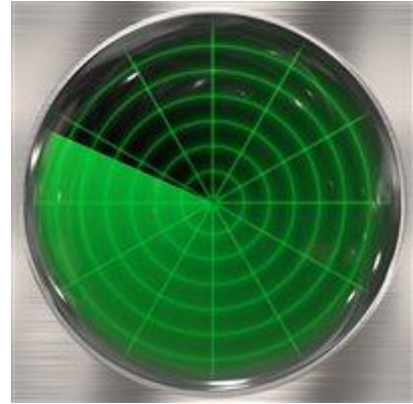


Read receipts and the people who need them

By [Crabby](#)
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When you put all that work into writing the perfect email message, it's nice to know that someone has received and read it. Outlook has a feature that can help with that, but it's a two-way street: Your recipient has to be willing to cross it with you.

I like to think of it this way: When you order a meal in a restaurant, you know that the chef has received your "message" because your food arrives a short while later (provided you haven't angered the chef by making too many suggestions). When it comes to email, however, things aren't so black and white. How can you be sure that someone has received and actually read your message? To put it bluntly, you can make it easy for them to let you know...but you can't make it happen. You can set it up for your recipients to let you know if they've read (or even just received) your note, but it's really up to *them* to decide whether to let you know or not.

Oh, the games people play...

First, let's figure out how to set up message tracking. Because if you don't do that first, they can't use it.

Message tracking: When you just *have* to know

You've sent out a very important message to someone. You may be a teacher who wants to know that your students got their homework assignment that you emailed to them. Or perhaps you're taking a survey within your company and want to be sure that everyone received and read the email asking them to respond to the survey. In Outlook, you can set up a message so that each recipient has the option of notifying you that they have: (1) received the message and (2) read the message.

You can also be notified about a specific message, or you can set it up so that you're notified of all messages. More on that in a minute.

- Here's how to [get a delivery or read receipt in Outlook 2010](#).
- And here's how to be notified when [others receive and/or read your email in Outlook 2007](#).

You've now done all you can do. But just because you've taken these steps doesn't mean it's a 100% sure thing that you'll know if and when your recipients have read your message. And why is that? I'll say it again: Because it's up to your recipients to let you know...or not. See, while you've been reading about how to set up message tracking, they've been reading about how to [change automatic response to read](#)

[receipts](#). Your recipients have the option to send a read receipt whenever it's requested, to never send one, or to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to send one.

Therefore, I strongly advise you to track *only single messages of great importance*. If people keep getting a bunch of tracked messages, they are more likely to get irritated and just say the heck with it and never send a receipt.

Managing message tracking: The options

Now that you know how to set up a read receipt, there are a few other things you can do to try and stay on top of things:

- Change how meeting requests, polls, and read or delivery receipts are processed ([Outlook 2010](#); [Outlook 2007](#)).

Now, see what I mean about read receipts? You can do your part to set it up so that your recipient knows you're requesting one, but it's up to her to decide if she wants you to know that she knows that you want to know if she got your message.

And maybe she doesn't want you to know. Maybe you two have some sort of sick little mind game going on. I've no idea; nor do I care. My only part in this is to tell you about your options and then set you free to go off and be the most professional email sender you can be.



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— Crabby