

Apple iPhone with VoiceOver

Lesson 8 - The Mailbox Screen



This lesson has been designed for users of iPhone models which have a Home Button, in conjunction with the VoiceOver screen reader and iOS 18.2. For reference, models of iPhone with a Home Button which are compatible with iOS 18.2 are: SE 2020 and SE 2022.

iOS 18.2 has brought some amazing new features, including Apple Intelligence. It has also brought some cosmetic changes to the Operating System. Depending on how your iPhone has been configured, you may find some minor differences when working through the information provided in this lesson. However, it isn't anticipated that they will cause you much of a problem!

1. Introduction

The Mailbox screen is the main screen of the Mail application. From this screen you can open incoming email messages, move and organize your mail into lists, search for specific messages and open a new screen to start composing a new message you wish to send to someone else. In this lesson you will learn:

- The various parts of the Mailbox screen.
- How to navigate to other Mailboxes and Folders.
- How to search for messages that match conditions you specify.
- How to Move, Delete or Mark multiple messages.
- How to open a message for reading.

2. Terms you Should Know

2.1 Mailboxes and Folders

Most email applications support multiple folders where mail is placed either automatically, or by you, after reviewing it. When discussing the Mail app on your iPhone, a mailbox and a folder are the same thing. For simplicity and to avoid any confusion, we will refer to a mailbox as a folder throughout this lesson.

Following are the folders supported by the Mail app.

Inbox

This folder stores new mail. Messages you have read will stay in the Inbox until you move or delete them.

Drafts

Messages you have not finished composing are stored here so you can finish them at a later time.

Sent

Most mail programs place a copy of every message you send in this folder so they are available to you for future reference.

Junk

When you place mail in this folder, future messages from that sender are considered SPAM and will automatically go to this folder, bypassing your Inbox. Many email service providers also place mail here that they think is SPAM. It is a good idea to check this folder once in a while to ensure that messages you want are not being mistaken for SPAM by your email provider.

Bin

Messages you delete are held here for a short period of time in case you decide you need that message after all. Once the hold time expires, the message is gone forever. Hold times are usually 2 days to one week depending on your email provider.

Outbox

If your device cannot send a message straight away, it places it in the Outbox folder, until it can connect to the mail server. Sometimes a mistake in a recipient's email address can get a message stuck here as well.

Unread

This is a filtered version of your Inbox. Only unread messages are displayed here.

VIP

This is a filtered version of your inbox. It shows only messages from senders you have designated as VIP's.

Depending on your email provider, you may find additional mailboxes in the list. These could include Sent Items, Deleted Items and Trash.

3. Launching the Mail App

Let's take the mail app for a spin. Find it on the Home Screen. By default it is in the Dock. Go ahead and launch it with an Activate gesture.

The Mail App has three screens. These are the Mailboxes screen, the Mailbox screen and the Message Content Screen. The Mailboxes screen displays a list of all accounts you have setup in the Mail app, each of which has its own folder structure. The Mailbox screen displays the contents of a folder, such as messages you have received, sent or deleted. The Message Content Screen displays the contents of an individual message. The message may be one you are reading or one you are composing. When you launch the Mail app, your iPhone will display the Mailbox screen. This is usually the Inbox folder from the default email account.

4. The Mailbox Screen

At the top of the Mailbox screen is an Action row containing three buttons. At the far left you will find the "Back" button. This button will contain the name of the email account from which the current folder is being displayed. Off-centre to the right, you will find the "Select" button, and at the far right you will find the "More" button.

Below the Action Row you will find a heading which tells you the name of the Mailbox or Folder being displayed, such as Inbox, Sent or Deleted Items. Below this heading, you will find a search Field, and to the right of this a Dictate button.

Below the search field, you will find a series of buttons labelled Primary, Transactions, Updates and Promotions. These buttons are used to view mail messages which have been automatically grouped together by Artificial Intelligence, depending on their content. The currently selected button should be "Primary". Below these buttons, you will find the list of messages from the Primary category.

Situated at the bottom left corner of the Mailbox screen, you will find a label which tells you when your device last checked for new mail. This label will also include the number of unread messages in the folder. At the bottom right corner of the screen, you will find the "Compose" button which you can activate to create a new email message.

The Mail app gives you the ability to minimize one or more messages that you are editing and return to the Mailbox screen. Minimizing means taking an application window and reducing it to a single button towards the bottom of the screen. When messages you are editing have been minimized, a button appears at the very bottom of the Mailbox screen which Voiceover announces as "Drafts", followed by the number of messages currently minimized. Don't get this confused with the "Drafts" folder. Minimized messages are not stored in the drafts folder yet, and messages in the Drafts folder do not appear in the minimized list. We will discuss how to do this in more detail in Lesson 10 - Composing Email.

When you activate the Drafts button, you will be presented with a list of all the messages you are editing that are in this minimized state. The first button simply states the Subject of the message. Activate this button to return to editing that message. The second button says, "close", followed by the message subject. Activate this button to remove the message from the minimized list and save it to the drafts folder for editing at a later stage.

The first time the Mailbox screen is displayed it will show your Inbox. At the upper left corner of the Mailbox screen, you will find a "Back" button, which contains the name of the current mail account you are in.

In SECTION 2, Terms You Should Know, we discussed the different mailboxes the Mail app supports. If you wish to view email messages from a different folder, activate the "Inbox, Back" button to navigate to the mailboxes list. Go ahead and activate it now.

4.1 The Mailboxes List

Here you can navigate to one of the other mailboxes such as Drafts, Sent or Bin. You can also navigate to other email accounts. When you make one of the accounts the Current Item, VoiceOver will announce whether or not the account is collapsed or expanded. If VoiceOver says "collapsed", you will have to perform an Activate gesture to expand it and display the available folders.

Find the folder you want in the list and Activate it. If the one you want isn't present, activate the "Edit" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to display a list of all possible folders. As you scroll down the list, you will find some folders are Selected, and some are not. Use the Select gesture to choose the folder you want displayed in the Mailboxes screen. You can also change the order of the folders in this screen.

Some of the folder names are preceded with the word "All". If you are managing multiple email accounts through your iPhone, then choosing the "All Inboxes" folder will show you one list of messages that combines the Inboxes from all the accounts. All Sent Items combines the messages you have sent using any of your accounts, and so on. At the bottom of the Mailboxes List you will find the "New Mailbox" button. You can activate this button to create a new folder. More on this in a later lesson.

If you have minimized messages that you were editing, the Drafts button appears at the very bottom of the screen. Remember that the list of messages under the Drafts button is not the same as those in your Drafts folder.

When you have finished making your selections, activate the "Done" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen. Upon doing this, you will be returned to the Mailboxes screen. From the Mailboxes screen, open the "All Inboxes" folder.

5. Selecting Multiple Items from the Message List

Situated at the top of the Mailbox screen, just off-centre, you will find the Select button. When you activate this button, you are able to select multiple messages from the list at the same time. As you select and deselect messages, the heading below the Action Row will change to indicate the number of messages you have selected.

You select, or deselect, each message with the Select gesture. When you have selected the right combination of messages, you can perform a single action on all of them at the same time. You select the action to perform by activating one of the buttons at the bottom of the screen. When you complete your action, you will be returned to the Mailbox screen.

TIP: When you are selecting multiple items from a list, you may want to use the Split Tap version of the select gesture. Explore down the list with one finger. When you find an item you want to select, Keep your finger stationary and tap anywhere on the display with another finger. The item under your stationary finger becomes selected, and you can continue Exploring the list without having to find your place again.

If you decide you don't want to perform any actions, you can activate the "Cancel" button, situated at the upper right corner of the screen, to return to the normal function of the Mailbox screen.

The buttons at the bottom of the screen and a brief description of what they are used for, are described in the next three sections.

5.1 The "Mark" button

This button displays a popup menu which allows you to flag your selected messages, mark them all as read or unread or move them to the Junk mailbox. Once a message is flagged, the only way to unflag it is to activate the Select button again, then locate and activate the marked message in the list. Then, activate the Mark button and in the resulting screen, locate and activate the "Unflag" button.

5.2 The "Move" Button

Use this button to move all the messages you have selected to a different folder. If you are managing multiple accounts with your iPhone, only those folders associated with the account you are working in will be available.

5.3 The "Delete" button

If your default email account is an iCloud account, When you Delete a message, it is moved to the "Bin" folder. The Bin folder will hold deleted messages for a small number of days in case you decide later that you really need that message after all. If your default email account is from another provider, you may have a different folder for storing deleted messages, such as Deleted Messages or Trash.

To "undelete" a message, navigate to the Bin mailbox, or the designated mailbox for deleted messages, and open the message. Use the "Move" button at the bottom of the screen to move the message to another folder such as the Inbox.

Remember, if you have minimized messages that you are editing, the Drafts button will appear at the bottom of the screen.

6. Searching for Messages

A search field is situated immediately below the heading for the current folder, at the top of the screen. You can enter text in this field just like you do in any other text field. When you do, your device will search for any message with your text in any of these fields, To, Cc, Bcc, Subject or message body. This search cannot search inside attachments. So if you type the letters g, r, and a, in the search field, it will find messages where Lou.Grant is in any of the address fields, messages with the subject "Office Grab bag", and the message you received with the lyrics to "Grandma got run over by a reindeer", but it will not find an email with an attachment that has the word "grapes" in it.

You can also search by timeframe by typing a month in the search field. For example "January" will find all messages received in January. Typing the words "January" and "order", will find all messages received in January with the word "Order" in any of the address fields, subject

field or the message body. Of course, it will also find messages received in January, with the word recorder or border in them as well.

You can search by message state as well. For example, "unread" finds all messages you have not read yet. Entering "VIP" in the search field shows all messages from email addresses you have designated as VIPs, and "Attachment" shows any messages with attachments.

NOTE 1: If you want to see only unread or VIP messages, there are also folders in the Mailboxes list which are already set up to do this for you. The full list of Mailboxes is displayed by activating the "Edit" button at the top right corner of the Mailboxes screen.

7. The Message List

All the messages in the current folder are listed in the message list. You can Explore through the list, or use the Next and Previous Item gestures until you find the message you want, and make it the Current Item. Then you can perform any of the actions in sections 8.1 and 8.2 below.

Before you navigate the message list, it is recommended to make a change to how the Mailbox screen is displayed. As previously mentioned, there are a group of buttons at the top of the screen, which are used to display messages which have been grouped together by Artificial Intelligence. This arrangement can make finding a particular message difficult, as you will need to activate the appropriate button first and then navigate the resulting list of messages. It is far better to have all messages grouped together in a single list.

7.1 Displaying Messages in a Single List

The default view is to have messages in the current Mailbox categorised by the use of Artificial Intelligence. Whilst this can be useful, for most people, it will be confusing and cumbersome. It is possible to change the view to show all messages, which makes navigation easier. To change to a single list format, follow these steps:

1. Activate the "More" button, situated at the upper right corner of the Mailbox screen. Upon doing this, a popup menu will be displayed. VoiceOver will say the name of the Current Item in this menu. This should be "Categories".

2. Perform the Next Item gesture until VoiceOver says "List View". This option is actually a button, but VoiceOver doesn't alert you to this.
3. Perform an Activate gesture. Upon doing this, you will be returned to the Mailbox screen. The four buttons towards the top of the screen will now be removed and all messages will be displayed.

If the list of messages is longer than one screen, you can use the Next and Previous Screen gestures to scroll the list one screen at a time. If you want to get back to the top of the list quickly, try the Jump to Top gesture, or the First Item gesture, to move to the top of the screen and then use the Next Item gesture until the first message in the list of emails is the Current Item.

7.2 The Toggle Filter Button

This button is situated at the bottom left corner of the Mailbox screen. When it is the Current Item, VoiceOver announces whether or not the button is on or off. By default, when it is "on", only messages which haven't been read are displayed. When it is "off", all messages are displayed. To switch between "on" and "off", perform an Activate gesture.

The default action is to switch between all and unread messages, however, you can choose other things to filter by. When the Toggle Filter button is "on", an additional button, labelled "Filtered by", is made available. This is situated immediately to the right of the Toggle Filter button. This button contains the name of the current filter option.

When the Filter By button is activated, a popup menu is displayed, which includes the following options: Unread (default), Addressed, To: Me, CC: Me, Only Mail with Attachments, Only from VIP and Only Mail Sent Today. You can choose just one, or a combination of more than one option to filter by. To choose an option, make the option you want the Current Item and perform the Select gesture. When you have specified the desired filter type, activate the "Done" button, situated at the upper right corner of the menu.

7.3 The Updated Label

This label is at the bottom of the screen, just to the right of the Toggle Filter button. It tells you how long ago your device last checked for, or fetched, new mail.

8. Actions from the Mailbox screen

In order to perform any of the actions in sections 8.1 and 8.2, you must first make a message the Current Item. You can do this with the Explore gesture, or the Next Item or Previous Item gestures, but don't use the Activate gesture. This will take you to the Message Content screen as described in section 8.1 below.

8.1 Activate/Open a Message

Activating and Opening a message mean the same thing. Use an Activate gesture to open a message.

8.2 Rotor based actions

By default when you make a message in the message list the Current Item, the Rotor function should automatically be set to "Actions", but just in case it is not, use the "Dial" gesture until Voiceover says "Actions".

Now use the Set Mode gesture repeatedly to discover the available modes under the Rotor's Action function. For reference, they are as follows:

Activate (Default Action)

When Voiceover says, "Default Action", it means that this is what will happen when you use an Activate gesture without invoking the Rotor or the Set Mode gesture.

Mark as Read or Unread

Toggles the status of the current item between Read and Unread. This can be helpful to keep drawing your attention to a message even after you have reviewed it.

Flag

This option places a visual symbol by the message to flag it for follow up. When you navigate to an item which is flagged, VoiceOver announces "flagged" after the message summary.

More

This opens a popup menu consisting of additional options.

Read Later

This option allows you to set a reminder to read the selected mail message after a predefined amount of time. Options available include Remind Me Later, Remind Me Tonight, Remind Me Tomorrow and Remind Me, which allows you to specify a date and time to be reminded.

Drag

This allows you to reposition a message in the list. For example, if you wanted a specific email to be readily available, you could move it to the top of the list so you can find it more easily.

Delete

Activate this option to delete the selected email message.

The following options are available when the "More" mode is activated. You can perform any of them without having to open the message!

Reply

Activate this option to Create a reply message to the sender.

Reply All

Activate this option to Create a reply message to the sender and everyone else who received the message.

Forward

Activate this option to forward the message that is the Current item to other recipients.

Delete Message

Activate this option to delete the selected email message.

Remind Me

This option allows you to set a reminder to read the selected mail message after a predefined amount of time. Options available include Remind Me Later, Remind Me Tonight, Remind Me Tomorrow and Remind Me, which allows you to specify a date and time to be reminded.

Flag

This option places a visual symbol by the message to flag it for follow up.

Mark as Read or Unread

Toggles the status of the current item between Read and Unread. This can be helpful to keep drawing your attention to a message even after you have reviewed it.

Move Message

Allows you to move the message to another mailbox, with the exception of the Junk folder.

Move to Junk

Moves the message to the Junk folder. All future messages from the sender will go immediately to Junk.

Mute

When this option is activated, you will no longer receive notifications about mail messages received from the sender. Email messages will still be delivered to your Inbox, you just won't get notified about them.

Notify Me

Alerts you using Push Notifications when a reply is received for a Message thread.

Block Sender

Activating this item blocks the sender of the selected email message from sending email messages to you in the future. Their email address is added to the Blocked Senders list, found in the Mail Setup screen of the Settings app.

Show Related Messages

Filters the Mailbox List to show only messages in the same thread as the Current Item. This option will not appear if there are no replies or forwards from the original message.

Report a Concern

This option opens a web page in which you can choose from a list of options why you are concerned about the summary of the message provided by AI (more about this later). The information is used by Apple to help them improve their products and services. For example, training AI models. Some of the options available in this screen include hard to understand, incorrect attributions, stereotyping or bias, overly suggestive or sexual, vulgar or offensive and other. At the bottom of the screen, you will find the "Submit Report" button, which you activate once you have made your choices.

You can dismiss the Popup menu by activating the "Close" button, situated at the top of the list of options, or by Exploring with your finger until you pass outside its borders. When Voiceover says, "Dismiss Popup", you can use an Activate gesture to clear the Popup without taking any action.

8.3 The Refresh Content Gesture

If you want to immediately check for new mail without waiting for the regular time interval, you can do the following:

1. From the Mailboxes screen, locate the Inbox folder and perform an Activate gesture.
2. Use the Next Item gesture until the first email message in the list is the Current Item.
3. Perform a Three Finger Swipe Down. Upon doing this, Voiceover will say "refreshing content", and your iPhone will check your account for new mail.

8.4 The "Compose" Button

This button is located at the bottom right corner of the Mailbox screen. You can activate it to create a new email message. When you activate the Compose button, you will be taken to the Message Content Screen in edit mode. See Lesson 10 - Composing Mail for details.

9. New Gesture Review

Select

Single Finger Double Tap or Split Tap. This is a context sensitive version of the Activate gesture. It is commonly used to mark items in a list.

Refresh Content

Three Finger Swipe Down. This gesture only works when you make the first message in the Inbox folder the Current Item. This gesture causes your device to immediately fetch new Emails from the server without waiting for the specified time between fetches to elapse.

10. Exercises

1. What are Inbox, Junk, Sent Items and Trash all examples of?
2. What are the three screens used by the mail application?
3. How can you search for all unread messages from Tony?
How can you search for all messages received in January that have attachments?
4. Mark the top three messages as unread by selecting all of them, and then marking them all at once.
5. What are the Set Mode gesture options available when the Rotor is dialled to the "Actions" function and a message is the Current Item?
6. How do you fix the problem if the Set Mode gesture is not listing options, but is doing something else like moving one character at a time?

7. What is the purpose of the Toggle Filter button?
8. How can you manually check for new email messages?

The answers to these questions can be found on page 16.

Congratulations. In this lesson you learned how to navigate the Mailbox screen, move messages to other folders, search for messages, and select multiple messages. In the next two -lessons we will learn how to read incoming messages, compose new messages, forward messages and reply to messages.

Answers to Section 10 Exercises

1. What are Inbox, Junk, Sent Items and Trash all examples of?

These are all examples of Mailboxes/Folders. The terms can be used interchangeably.

2. What are the three screens used by the mail application?

The three screens used by the Mail app are the Mailboxes screen, the Mailbox screen and the Message Screen.

The Mailboxes screen displays a list of all accounts you have setup in the Mail app, each of which has its own folder structure. The Mailbox screen displays the list of messages in a specific folder. The Message Screen displays the contents of a message you have received, or the contents of a message you are editing. The Message Screen can only display one message at a time.

3. How can you search for all unread messages from Tony? How can you search for all messages received in January that have attachments?

Go to the Mailbox screen and display the folder you want to search in. To find any unread messages from Tony you could go to the "all Unread" mailbox and search for Tony. If you are in your inbox with a mixture of read and unread messages, you could search for the words "unread" and "Tony".

To find messages sent in January with attachments, type the words "jan" and "attachment" in the search field. Just bear in mind that you might also see messages from "Janice" or ads about vacuum cleaner attachments as well.

4. Mark the top three messages as unread by selecting all of them, and then marking them all at once.

From the Mailbox screen, activate the "Edit" button. Use the Select gesture, a single finger double tap, to select each message. Finally activate the "Mark" button and from the resulting list of options, choose Unread.

5. What are the Set Mode gesture options available when the Rotor is dialled to the "Actions" function and a message is the Current Item?

The Set Mode Gesture options that are available are More, Activate, Mark as Read or Unread, Flag, Drag Item, Delete and Read Later.

6. How do you fix the problem if the Set Mode gesture is not listing options, but is doing something else like moving one character at a time?

Use the Dial gesture to set the rotor to the "Actions" function.

7. What is the purpose of the Toggle Filter button?

By default, the Toggle Filter button is used to switch between displaying all messages, or only those messages which haven't been read. You can also choose to filter by various categories, such as Flag, Addressed and Only Messages with Attachments.

8. How can you manually check for new email messages?

Open the Inbox folder of the desired email account. Then, make the first email message in the list the Current Item and perform a Three Finger Swipe Down. VoiceOver will announce "refreshing content" to indicate that the list of messages has been updated.