

# Exchange to Microsoft 365 Migration Tips for a Seamless Transition



Migrating from Exchange Server to [Microsoft 365](#) brings many benefits, from accessibility to in-place archives and increased storage space. But the Exchange to Microsoft 365 migration process can be complex. Avoid migration failure by knowing what to expect, planning carefully and involving the right migration team members.

## Benefits of an Exchange to Microsoft 365 Migration

Organizations migrate from on-premises Exchange to Microsoft 365 for several reasons. In the first place, companies limping along on older versions of Exchange may experience access issues or server crashes. And even in a well-managed system, the need to install regular patches and keep servers updated can prove time-consuming.

Additionally, migration to Microsoft 365 brings all the [benefits of the cloud](#), including anytime/anywhere access, collaboration, and scalability. Users always have the latest email version, along with up-to-date spam and virus filters. And they benefit from increased storage, with mailboxes that hold up to 50 GB and feature-rich in-place archives.

From an administrative perspective, Microsoft 365 migration brings eDiscovery, compliance, and security features. For instance, Microsoft 365 streamlines eDiscovery with the ability to conduct an advanced search across the entire tenant. And it provides encryption in transit and at rest for all emails sent and received.



## Choose the Best Migration Option

Organizations have several options for migrating from Exchange to Microsoft 365. The right migration option for your company will depend on how many mailboxes you need to move, the version of your current Exchange Server and how quickly you want to migrate.

- Small organizations with older versions of Exchange Server may choose to go with a **cutover migration**. This option works best for companies that have 150 mailboxes or less and currently run Exchange 2003 or Exchange 2007. It involves moving all mailboxes over at once, typically over a weekend.
- Larger organizations, or organizations that want to migrate a limited number of mailboxes at a time, may choose a **staged migration**. This involves migrating mailboxes over in batches.
- An organization with more than 150 mailboxes, or one running Exchange 2010 or later, might choose a **hybrid migration**. This allows the company to maintain both online and on-premises mailboxes and move users to Microsoft 365 gradually.

## Take Time to Prepare the Microsoft 365 Environment

Before moving any data over to the new system, take time to thoughtfully prepare the destination environment. This will involve talking with business stakeholders to determine workflows and how data should be structured. You will need to purchase the right type and number of licenses. And you will need to set up users and associated permissions.

Additionally, you will need to address Exchange Server distribution lists, which are not supported in Microsoft 365. Instead, Microsoft 365 uses Groups. [Microsoft Groups](#) bring many useful features for streamlining collaboration and onboarding. But they will take some time to set up.

Migration also presents a good time to take a close look at the [cyber security and information governance features in Microsoft 365](#). With proper configuration, you can improve data security and governance right from the start.



## Avoid Common Migration Failure Scenarios

Without effective planning and preparation, email migrations can fail, causing significant work disruption. By addressing potential snags up front, you can help to ensure a smooth transition to Microsoft 365. Some common reasons that Microsoft 365 migrations fail include:

- Insufficient bandwidth – Microsoft 365 operates primarily in the cloud. As a result, the migration process consumes a fair amount of bandwidth. Make sure you have enough bandwidth. In addition, conduct file migration outside of business hours and make sure that no maintenance tasks are running during the migration.
- Migrating too many mailboxes at once – For a staged or hybrid migration, you will need to find the optimal number of mailboxes to migrate simultaneously. Migrating too much data at once will slow down the process.
- Overly large mailboxes and files – Large files or mailboxes approaching the 50 GB email storage limit will also cause significant slowdowns. Employees should be encouraged to archive old emails and delete large, redundant file attachments.

- Neglecting the end user – To accomplish a seamless migration, you must focus on the end user. Communicate with users frequently so that they know what to expect and when. Make sure they get the training they need so that they can maintain productivity and get the most out of the new system.

## Ensure Migration Success with the Right Team

Finally, achieving a smooth migration depends on gathering the right team members from the beginning of the process. That includes business stakeholders, as well as IT, of course. It should also include migration experts.

The [migration consultants at Messaging Architects](#) bring deep experience with Exchange to Microsoft 365 migrations. We will be with you every step of the way.