

★ Outlook Categories

Colour-coded tags you can apply to any message, event, or contact



■ What Categories Are

Categories are **colour labels** you assign manually (or via rules) to help you visually group related items.

You can apply them to:

- Emails
- Calendar events
- Contacts
- Tasks

Each category has:

- A **colour**
- A **name** (e.g., “Committee”, “Treasurer”, “Family”, “Urgent”)
- Optional keyboard shortcuts (desktop only)

They behave a bit like Gmail labels, but with fewer features.

■ What Categories Are Not

This is where people get confused:

- They are **not folders**
- They are **not rules**
- They do **not** move mail
- They do **not** affect Focused Inbox
- They do **not** appear in Outlook Web’s left-hand panel
- They do **not** sync perfectly across all Outlook versions

Categories are purely **tags**, not automation.

■ Where Categories Work Well

Categories shine when you want to visually group things:

- All Treasurer-related emails
- All Committee items
- All emails needing follow-up
- All emails related to a project
- All calendar events for a specific group
- All tasks for a particular role

They're especially good for **calendar organisation**.

■ Where Categories Fall Short

This is important for your club:

✗ Categories do *not* show up as a list in Outlook Web

You can *search* for them on the web, but you can't browse them like folders.

✗ Categories don't sync perfectly between:

- Outlook Classic
- Outlook Web
- New Outlook
- Outlook Mobile

Some versions show colours, some don't. Some show names, some don't.

✗ Categories don't automatically apply

Unless you create a **Rule**, you must assign them manually.

■ How Categories Compare to Labels (Gmail)

This is a great comparison point for your presentation:

Feature	Outlook Categories	Gmail Labels
Colour-coded	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Can apply multiple	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Appear in left panel	✗ No (web) / ✓ Yes (desktop)	✓ Always
Can be used like folders	✗ Not really	✓ Yes
Can be applied by rules	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Sync across all versions	✗ Not reliably	✓ Yes

Gmail labels are more powerful and more consistent. Outlook categories are more visual and more flexible across email + calendar + contacts.

■ Club-friendly summary

Categories are colour-coded tags you can put on emails, calendar events, and contacts. They don't move mail or organise it automatically — they just help you see what belongs together.