

★ How Outlook decides what goes into the Focused Inbox



Outlook uses a **machine-learning classifier** that constantly watches how *you* handle your mail. It's not a fixed rule system — it adapts to your behaviour.

It looks at four main categories of signals:

1) Your own behaviour (the strongest signal)

Outlook watches what *you* do with messages from each sender:

- Emails you **open quickly** → more likely to go to *Focused*
- Emails you **reply to** → very strong Focused signal
- Emails you **delete without opening** → likely to go to *Other*
- Emails you **move manually** between Focused/Other → Outlook learns instantly
- Emails you **flag/star** → more Focused
- Emails you **ignore** → more Other

This is why two people in the same office can get the same email but see it in different places.

2) Who the sender is

Outlook boosts messages from:

- People in your **Contacts**
- People you **email frequently**
- People in your **organisation** (for business accounts)
- People you've had **recent conversations** with

And it down-ranks:

- Bulk senders
- Newsletters
- Automated systems
- Anything with “unsubscribe” headers

3) Message content & structure

Outlook analyses the message itself:

- Personal, conversational language → Focused
- Marketing templates → Other
- Lots of images/buttons → Other
- Transactional emails (receipts, notifications) → Other
- Replies and forwards → Focused

- Long conversational threads → Focused

4) Crowd behaviour (anonymised)

This is subtle but real:

If millions of Outlook users consistently move a sender to *Other*, Outlook learns that the sender is “low priority”.

Likewise, if a sender is widely treated as important, Outlook boosts it.

This is why:

- Amazon receipts → Other
- Your accountant → Focused
- Your bank → Focused
- Newsletters → Other
- Real people → Focused

★ What Focused Inbox *does NOT* look at

This is important for your club:

- It does **not** look at your folders
- It does **not** look at your categories
- It does **not** look at your rules
- It does **not** look at your labels (Gmail concept)
- It does **not** look at message size
- It does **not** look at attachments

It's purely behavioural + sender reputation + message type.

★ How to train it (the bit users need to know)

To move something to Focused:

Right-click → **Move to Focused** (or drag it)

Outlook learns immediately.

To move something to Other:

Right-click → **Move to Other**

To make it permanent:

Choose **Always move** when prompted.

This is the only reliable way to tame it.

★ Club-friendly summary

“Focused Inbox is Outlook’s attempt to guess what’s important. It learns from what you open, reply to, delete, and move. Real people go to Focused. Newsletters and automated stuff go to Other.”