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How to Back up and Move from One Email Server to Another

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My goal: Move my email safely from one email service provider to another (IMAP). I was surprised that it wasn't that easy to find a simple step by step tutorial out there to do this. I hope this tutorial will help someone. If your email account is old, this process may take quite a bit of time, so please allow a few hours or have a second computer to work on while the process is happening. Pre-Migration Suggestions

- make sure no other inboxes on other machines are being used at this time (ie. mobiles, other computers)
- assumptions are that you have already using Thunderbird email client on your computer
- tutorials always work better if Ubuntu is your operating system
- if you have created local folders in Thunderbird (folders that reside on the computer itself and don't sync with the email IMAP syncs) then note that these will not be affected but you should consider them in your back up procedures because they also will not be backed up

1. Create your new email service with new provider This is pretty obvious, but just make sure it's all set up and that it is an IMAP setup. We will assume IMAP moving forward. Make sure your user name and password are handy
2. Create a new email account in Thunderbird, name it 'new email server' (or something to distinguish it as new provider), and plug in the credentials as you set it up Most good email service providers will have a dedicated tutorial about how to set up an email account with their company using Thunderbird. If they don't consider ditching them as a company because they are weird and probably useless and a recipe for future pain. If you can't track it down, this one should get you going from the folks at Mozilla [HOW TO MANUALLY SET UP EMAIL ACCOUNT IN THUNDERBIRD](#)
3. Make sure you subscribe to all IMAP folders on *both* old and new servers [QUICK TUTORIAL ABOUT HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO IMAP FOLDERS IN THUNDERBIRD](#)
4. Click through each IMAP folder (inbox, sent, drafts, etc) and make sure all items are downloaded to target machine in Thunderbird If you use multiple machines with your email, you should do this to make sure that this machine is up to date with email sync (ie. make sure that all your email machines have connected to the internet and synced up email). Once you click through each email folder you'll see the status bar showing progress of items downloading if any. You may choose not to transfer your trash over (it is trash after all) but it works same way as any other folder. Once you've clicked through each IMAP folder on *old/current* email provider and activity is over, proceed to the next step. Please note the updates may take time if this machine has not been updated recently or at all.
5. Select all items in folder Starting with the inbox IMAP folder, press 'control A' which will select all the email messages in the inbox folder. They will be highlighted so you know they are selected.
6. Right click and 'move to' all the items to new server You will see the new, nicely named server and it's inbox when you right click. You won't, however, see the sub directories like spam, drafts, etc. Once you touch it with your mouse, however, they will appear. Drop the inbox items into the inbox IMAP directory of new server. Please note, again, this will take time because the new email server is uploading the emails. In my case it was about 15 minutes to do about 5000 emails.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 for the rest of the IMAP directories
8. Turn off old email, Turn on new Once all the transfers are done, what I did was just change the Thunderbird password settings in my account settings to something incorrect so that my old email could no longer connect to the email server. Then I simply started using the new email inbox as per normal. I just wanted to make sure

everything was transferred correctly before I go back and wipe everything associated with the old email inbox/account. And that's it. You should now have the old email server on your computer which is essentially disabled and useless and the new email server properly working. You'll also need to copy over your email signatures and all that stuff to the new server as a reminder. Also note that when you are sending emails, if you don't delete the old email server, there is a possibility that Thunderbird will default sending from the old one and receiving so you'll have emails not working and you'll think it's broken. That's why naming the account something obvious is important because you can update those on the fly through the dropdown 'reply-to' field (from). It will give you your old server and new server in the option list. I think that covers it. Enjoy!

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