

# How to Fix Search Problems in Microsoft Outlook

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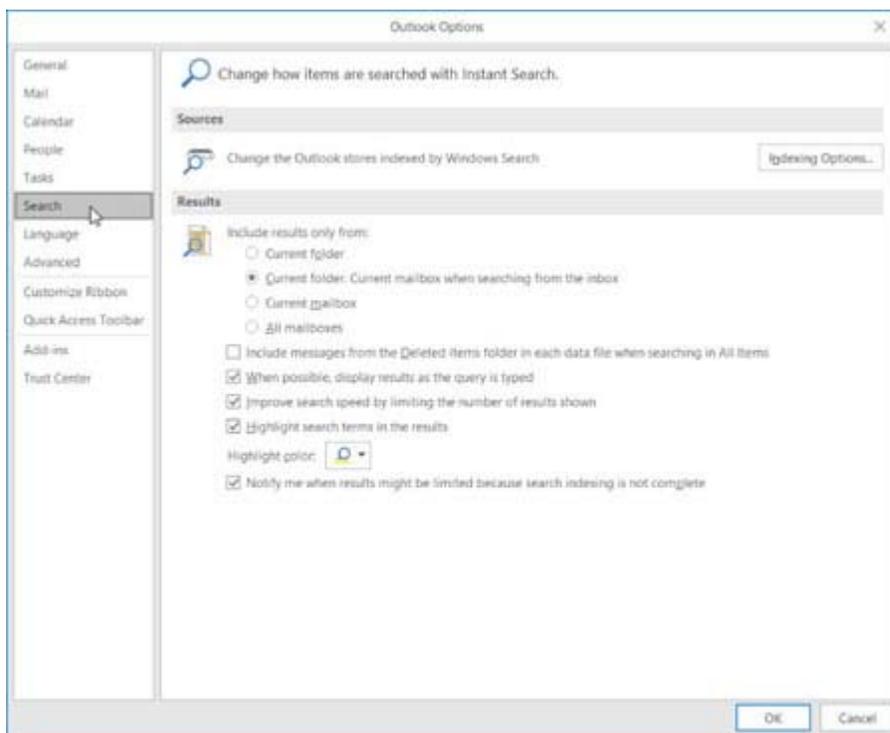
*No results coming up when you run a search in Microsoft Outlook? Here are several ways you can troubleshoot and hopefully fix such a problem.*

Are you coming up empty when you search for messages in Microsoft Outlook? The search feature does have a way of going on the fritz every now and then. The issue sometimes lies within the Windows search indexing, which sometimes stops working properly. But other factors can impact Outlook searches. The problem becomes obvious when you run a search for messages that you know are in your mailbox, but Outlook says it couldn't find anything. You may not be able to find the specific cause of the glitch, but there are several ways you can try to resolve it. You can remove Outlook from the search index and then add it back. You can rebuild the search index. You can scan your PST file for errors. And if all else fails, you can create a new PST file.

I recently bumped into search problems in Outlook. When typing the name of a person or subject or other criteria in the **Search Current Mailbox** field, I'd get nada in return. And I knew I should be seeing some results in response to my search. So, clearly the search feature was not working. I ran through several steps from minor to major until eventually the problem was resolved. So, what did I do? Let's go through the process.

First, I use Outlook 2016, but the steps I cover here apply to previous versions of Outlook as well. The steps also are the same whether you're using the packaged, one-time priced version of Microsoft Office or the subscription-based Office 365 as it's the same product, just sold differently.

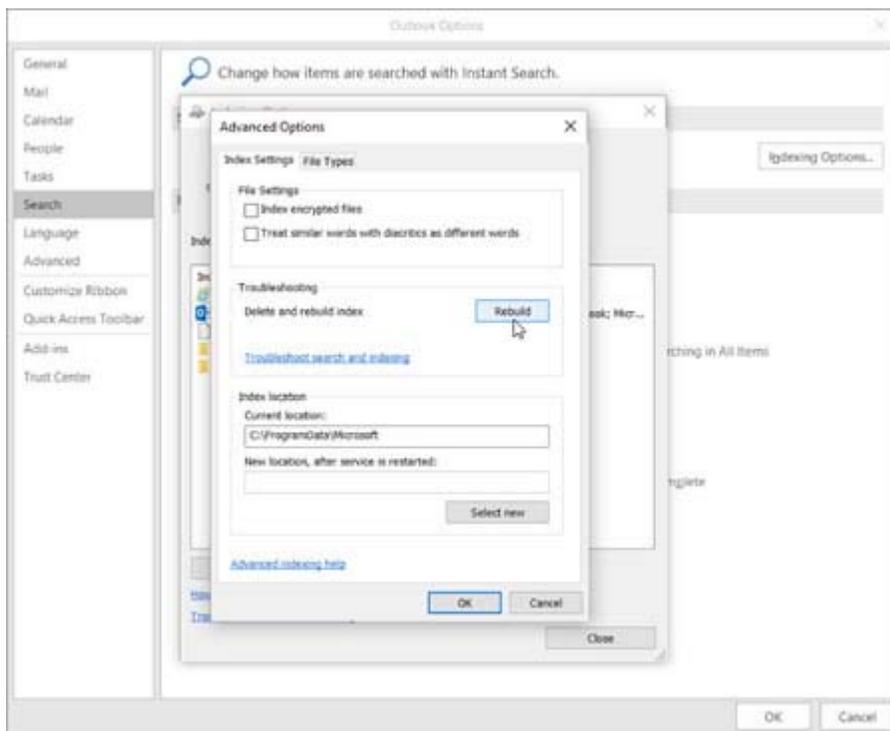
To start, you want to make sure all the necessary options and settings are enabled properly in the Outlook search. To do this in Outlook, click on the **File** menu and then select the **Options** command. At the **Outlook Options** window, click on the **Search** item.



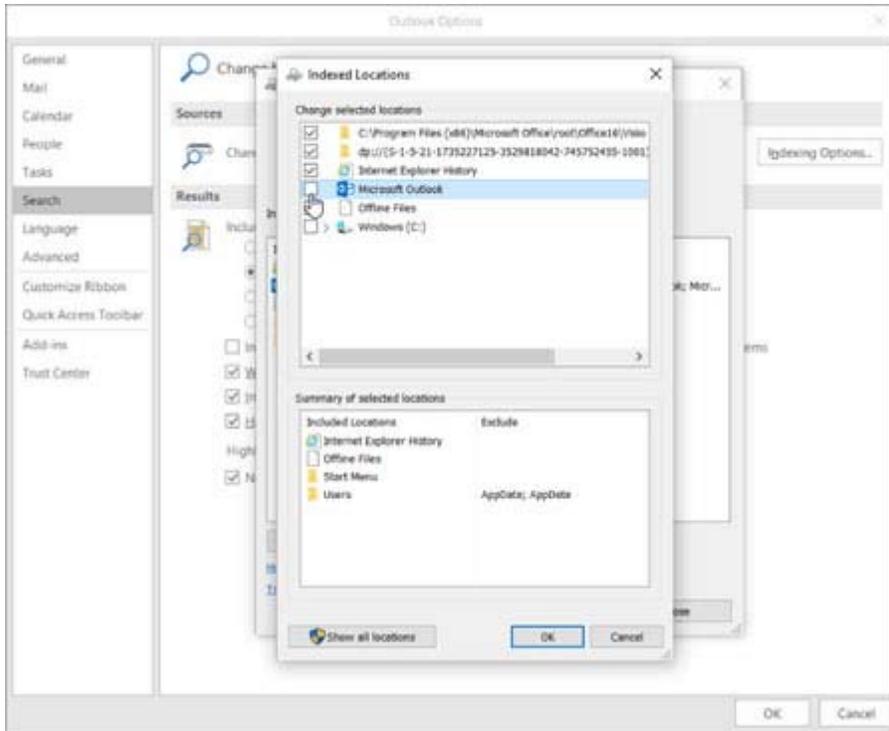
Click on the **Indexing Options** button. At the **Indexing Options** window, be sure Microsoft Outlook is listed among the **Included Locations**. If it's not, click on the **Modify** button, select **Microsoft Outlook** from the list of Indexed Locations and then click **OK**. Allow the Index some time to rebuild with Outlook included. Click Close. Then try running a search. Still not working? Okay, let's check the settings for Outlook. In the **Results** section of the **Outlook Options** window, make sure that **Include results only from** is set to **Current folder** if you wish to restrict the search to the current folder or one of the other choices if you wish to expand the search.

The option for **When possible, display results when the query is typed** should be checked. The option for **Improve search speed by limiting the number of results shown** can be unchecked if some results are popping up in a search but not the ones you're seeking, especially older messages. The option for **Highlight search terms in the results** can be checked. And the option for **Notify me when results might be limited because search indexing is not complete** should be checked. Okay, if all those options are set correctly, and you're still having search woes, let's move on.

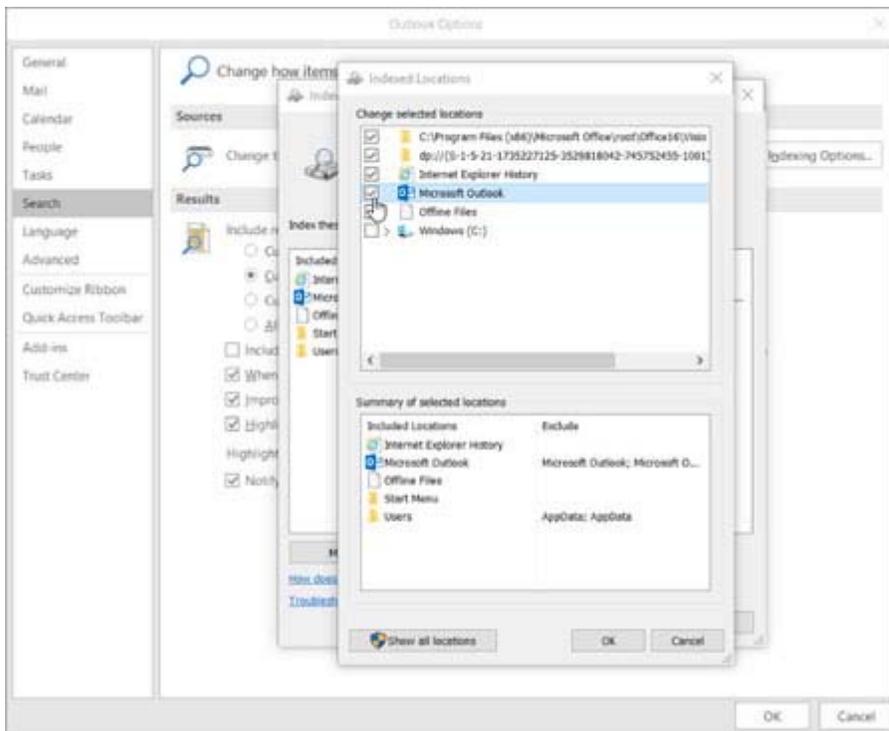
Microsoft Outlook searching is controlled by Windows Search, which uses an index file to catalog and dig up items in specific locations. Sometimes that index file can get corrupted. But we can rebuild it. From the Outlook Options window, click on the **Indexing Options** button. From the Indexing Options window, click on the **Advanced** button. Then click on the **Rebuild** button to delete and rebuild the index.



A message tells you that rebuilding the index might take a long time to complete. Click **OK**. You're told when the rebuild is finished. Close all the options windows and try another Outlook search. Still on the fritz? Okay, back to the drawing board. Return to the Outlook Options window and click on the **Indexing Options** button. Click on **Modify**. Uncheck **Microsoft Outlook** to remove it from the list of the Indexed Locations.

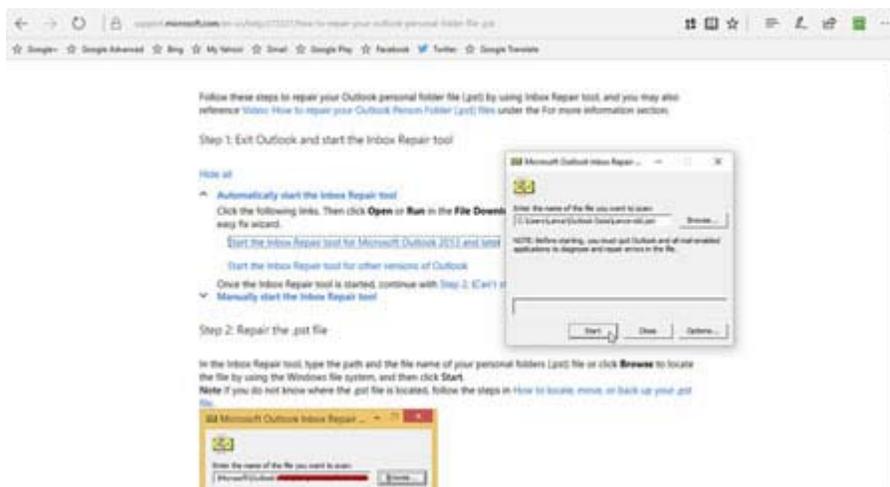


Click **OK** and then close the options window. Exit Outlook. Wait a few minutes. Reopen Outlook and return to the Indexing Options window. Click on **Modify**. From the list of Indexed Locations, check Microsoft Outlook to return it to the index.



Click **OK**. Close the options windows and try another search. Yikes, still not working. No problem. We're not licked yet. Sometimes, your PST file, the file that houses your Outlook messages and other data, can get corrupted. In that case, the search functionality and other features may misbehave. One measure you can take is to check for and repair any errors in your PST file. Depending on your version of Outlook, you can run a repair a few ways. Let's try the automated approach.

Make sure to close Outlook. Surf to the Microsoft page on "[How to repair your Outlook personal folder file \(.pst\)](#)." Click on the link to **Automatically start the Inbox Repair tool**. If you use Outlook 2013 or later, click on the link to **Start the Inbox Repair tool for Microsoft Outlook 2013 and later**. If you use an earlier version of Outlook, click on the link to **Start the Inbox Repair tool for other versions of Outlook**. Let's try the one for Outlook 2013 or later. Click on that link, and you're prompted to open a file called microsofteasyfix20101.mini.diagcab. Click **OK** or **Open**. At the Easy Fix window, click **Next**. At the Microsoft Outlook Inbox Repair Tool window, browse to and select the PST file you wish to scan. Click **Start** to begin the scan.

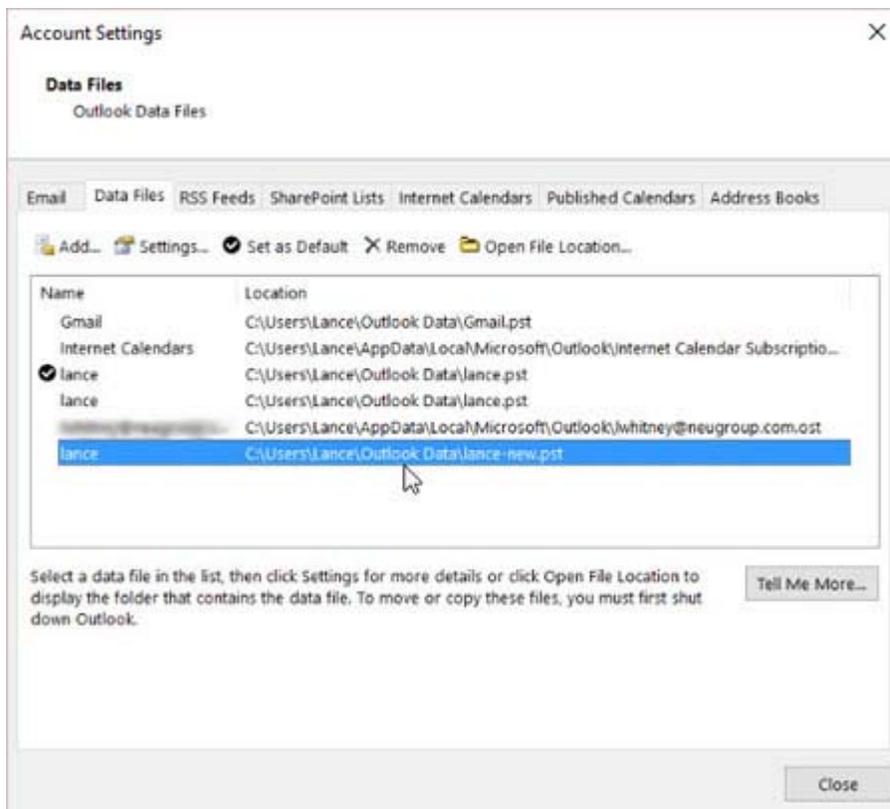


The tool tells you if it finds any errors and gives you the option to make a backup of the file before it attempts any repairs. Click on the **Repair** button. You can open Outlook again at this point and attempt another search. But sometimes you must use the Repair tool several times before the errors are resolved.

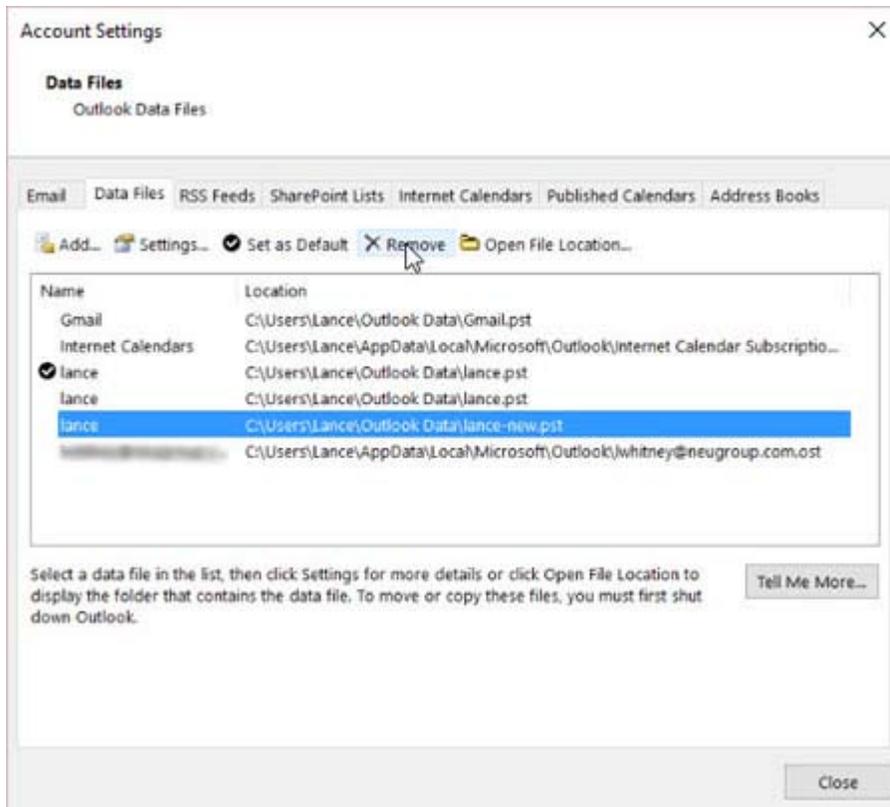
Search still isn't working? Don't fret. That's what happened in my case. And that's when you can turn to the ultimate step of creating a new PST file, which resolved the search problem in my case. To do this, make sure Outlook is closed. Then rename your existing PST file. If you're not sure of the name or location of your PST file, open Outlook, click on the **File** menu. Click on the **Account Settings** button and then click on **Account Settings** option. At the Account Settings window, click on the tab for **Data Files** and note the name and location of your PST file. Now close Outlook.

Browse to the folder for your PST file and rename the file. Open Outlook again. Outlook tells you it can't find the existing PST file. Click **OK**. At the Create/Open Outlook Data File window, browse to the location of your existing PST file and type a name for a new PST file. (You can use the same name as the original file). Click **Open**. Enter the password for your email account. Click **OK**.

In Outlook, click on the **File** menu. Click on the **Account Settings** button and then click on **Account Settings** option. At the Account Settings window, click on the tab for **Data Files**. Click on the **Add** button. Add the PST file that you just renamed. Click **Close**.



You'll now see entries for the two PST file – the new one you just created and the old, renamed one. You'll need to move all the folders and messages from the old, renamed PST file to the new one. Move one folder to start and then run a search. You should find that the search feature works in the new PST file as I did. If so, move all the other folders to the new PST file. After you've finished, the old, renamed PST file should be empty. Return to the **Data Files** tab in Account Settings. Click on the old, renamed PST file and click the **Remove** button to remove it from Outlook. After you exit Outlook, you can delete the file.



Yep, those are a lot of steps to fix search problems in Outlook. But hopefully one of the steps along the way will resolve this glitch should you ever bump into it.