

Gmail Tip #40: New Feature! Rich formatting!

Itâ??s the nail in the coffinâ?¦the icing on the cakeâ?¦the â??You had me at helloâ?• feature! Gmail finally has Rich Text formatting! But itâ??s not just for making your messages pretty. Read on to see why the addition of this feature propels Gmail way ahead of the competitionâ?¦

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In this tip, I will briefly explain how to enable Gmailâ??s new Rich formatting features, but first, I need to get right to the heart of the matter.

One thing that has bugged me all along with Gmail is how it handles the forwarding of richly formatted (HTML) messages. Whenever I received an email from an AOL user or an Outlook user, more often than not, it would contain rich formatting like different fonts, inline images, etc. The problem was that while Gmail would display the message perfectly while reading, when I went to reply to or forward the message, Gmail would convert everything to plain text, completely mangling the message. All formatting, inline images, and anything else that was not plain text was efficiently removed and forever lost. Needless to say, the end result was FAR from what was really sent to me. My biggest gripe was that if I receive a message, I should be able to reply to or forward it without its basic structure and formatting being altered.

Well that has all changed! By adding the Rich formatting editor, Gmail can now handle forwarding as it should. Kuddos to the Gmail developers!

OK, that said, hereâ??s the tip: If you receive a message and reply to or forward it with the plain text editor, all formatting will be stripped and the message will be sent as plain text. That much is the same. There may be cases where you might want to do this, bit not too oftern. If you have the Rich formatting editor enabled, when you reply to or forward the message, Gmail retains all the formatting for you and you can reply to and forward the message with the assurance that it will be received as it was received by you.

To ensure that the Rich editor is enabled, just click on the â??Compose mailâ?• link or press â??Câ?• if you have Keyboard Shortcuts enabled. Just below the â??Attach a fileâ?• link, and above the main text entry space, there will be a â??Rich formatting >>â?• link. Click on it, and the Rich formatting tools will display. Next, just discard the message. Gmail will remember your setting between sessions. If you watnt to revert back to Plain Text, just click on the â??<< Plain text" link to the right of the Rich formatting tools.

For a list of all the tools and their functions, go to this link where you will see a summary.

So not only do we get a very nice, fast, WYSIWYG editor, with the addition of this feature, Gmail, in my opinion, raises the bar significantly. Before, I simply could not recommend Gmail to anyone other than tech-savvy people, because forwarding some messages was simply too diffucult. People like my parents simply would have been confused and intimidated by the original design because handling such messages took significant effort. But that has all changed. It looks like this may be the answer to open the door to the masses!

With features like Labels, comprehensive Search, Rich formatting, unobtrusive, yet targete ads, and a gig of storage, I now feel that Gmail could be used by basically anyone, and now stands far above the competition.

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