



ORGANIZING EMAIL · LABELS

Grouping Labels with Parents & Children

Once you have a lot of labels, group the related ones together. A **parent** label (like **Vendors**) holds **child** labels (one per vendor), so your sidebar stays tidy and everything has an obvious home.



Why group your labels?

A long, flat list of labels gets hard to scan. **Nesting** fixes that: you create a broad **parent** label for a category, then tuck a **child** label under it for each specific item. Related labels stay together, and you can **collapse** a group you're not using to keep the sidebar short. Here are three groups you might build:

Vendors

- Acme Supply
- BJ's Warehouse
- Staples

Customers

- Globex
- Initech
- Umbrella Co.

Family

- Mom
- Dad
- Sister



A parent can just be a container.

You can file mail directly on a parent (e.g. general **Vendors** mail), or leave the parent empty and only ever use the children — whichever fits. The parent's main job is to gather the group together.



Quick Steps: Nest a Label Under a Parent

- 1 Create the **parent** label first (for example, `Vendors`).
- 2 Open **Settings** › **Labels** and click **+ Create label** (or click an existing label to edit it).
- 3 Type the **child** label's name (for example, `Acme Supply`).
- 4 Set the **Parent** dropdown to the parent label (`Vendors`).

- 5 Click **Save**. The child now appears **nested** under its parent in the sidebar.

Illustrated Walkthrough

1 Make the parent label first

A child needs a parent to point at, so create the broad category label first — **Vendors**, **Customers**, **Family**, and so on. If you're new to creating labels, the **Why Labels Beat Folders** guide covers the basics.

2 Create the child and choose its Parent

Create a new label for the specific item (say **Acme Supply**). In the **Parent** dropdown, instead of leaving it on **Inbox**, choose the group label — **Vendors**. That single choice is what nests it. Then click **Save**.

The screenshot shows the 'Edit' interface for a label named 'Follow Up'. The 'Parent' dropdown is set to 'Inbox'. The 'Message list' section has 'Show label in message list' checked. The 'Show in sidebar' section has 'Always show' selected. At the bottom, there are 'Save', 'Cancel', and 'Delete label' buttons.

Labels > Follow Up

Edit

Name
Follow Up
Great choice.

Parent
Inbox

Color
Orange

Message list
☒ Show label in message list

Show in sidebar
☒ Always show
☐ Hide if no unread
☐ Hide if empty
☐ Always hide

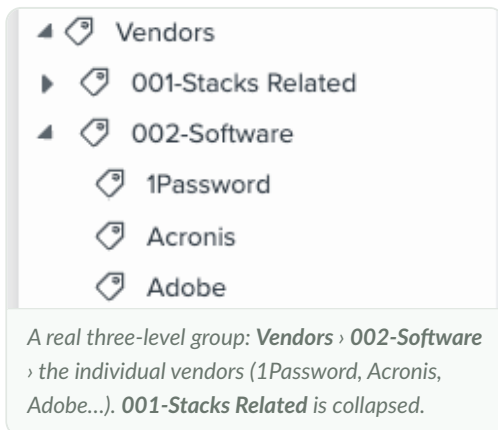
[Show advanced preferences](#)

Save Cancel Delete label

*The **Parent** dropdown is the whole trick: set it to the group label to nest this one beneath it.*

3 See it nested — and collapse when you like

Back in your mailbox, each child sits indented under its parent. A parent shows a small **triangle** — click it to **collapse** the group (hiding its children) or **expand** it again. Collapsing the groups you're not using keeps a long label list short and calm.



➤ Go as deep as each level earns.

Two levels (parent → item) is plenty for most groups, but add a middle level whenever it genuinely helps — like sorting **Vendors** by **type** first, then the individual vendors, as above. Just avoid nesting so deep that labels get buried.

⚠ Number a group to control its order.

Labels normally sort alphabetically. Prefixing them with numbers — `001 -`, `002 -` — lets you force the order you want within a group, exactly as in the example above.

4 Bonus: let rules file mail into a child label

Once the structure exists, a rule can drop incoming mail straight into the right child. Build a rule that matches a sender and adds the child label — for example, mail from Acme gets **Add label** “**Vendors › Acme Supply**” and **Archive** — and your vendor mail sorts itself, vendor by vendor.

➤ How to build that rule.

See **Organizing Incoming Mail with Rules** — the only difference here is that the label you pick in the **Add label** action is a *child* label.



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