

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**.

Labels > Follow Up

Edit

Name

Follow Up

Great choice.

Parent

Inbox

Color

Message list

☒ Show label in message list

Show in sidebar

☒ Always show

☐ Hide if no unread

☐ Hide if empty

☐ Always hide

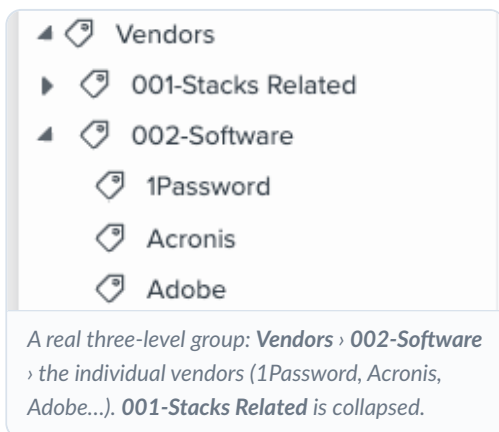
[Show advanced preferences](#)

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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