

How to share files via email: attachments vs. links

Sharing files with others is a common task, whether for group projects, assignments, or professional work. You can send files via email in two main ways:

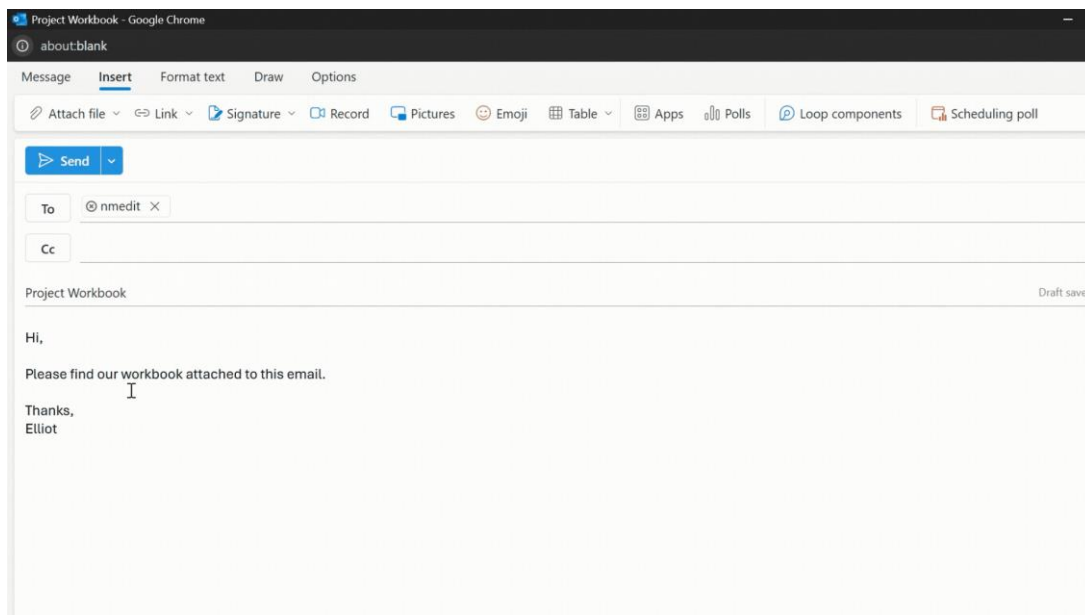
- Attaching the file directly – The file is included in the email
- Sharing a link to the file – Instead of sending the file itself, you provide a link to where it's stored (e.g., OneDrive).

This guide explains both methods and when to use each within Outlook.

Method 1: Attaching files directly to an email

Attaching a file you wish to send directly to an email is best for small files that don't need frequent updates. To attach your file directly:

- Compose a new email
- Select 'Insert' from the pane at the top of the screen, then 'Attach File'
- Select the file from your computer or cloud provider. When using Outlook and OneDrive, you will have the option to 'Share Link' or 'Attach' – to swap between the two, use the downward-facing arrow as seen below. For this method, select 'Attach.' If you're using a file saved to your computer directly, it will automatically assign it as an attachment.



Send your email once your attachment has finished uploading.

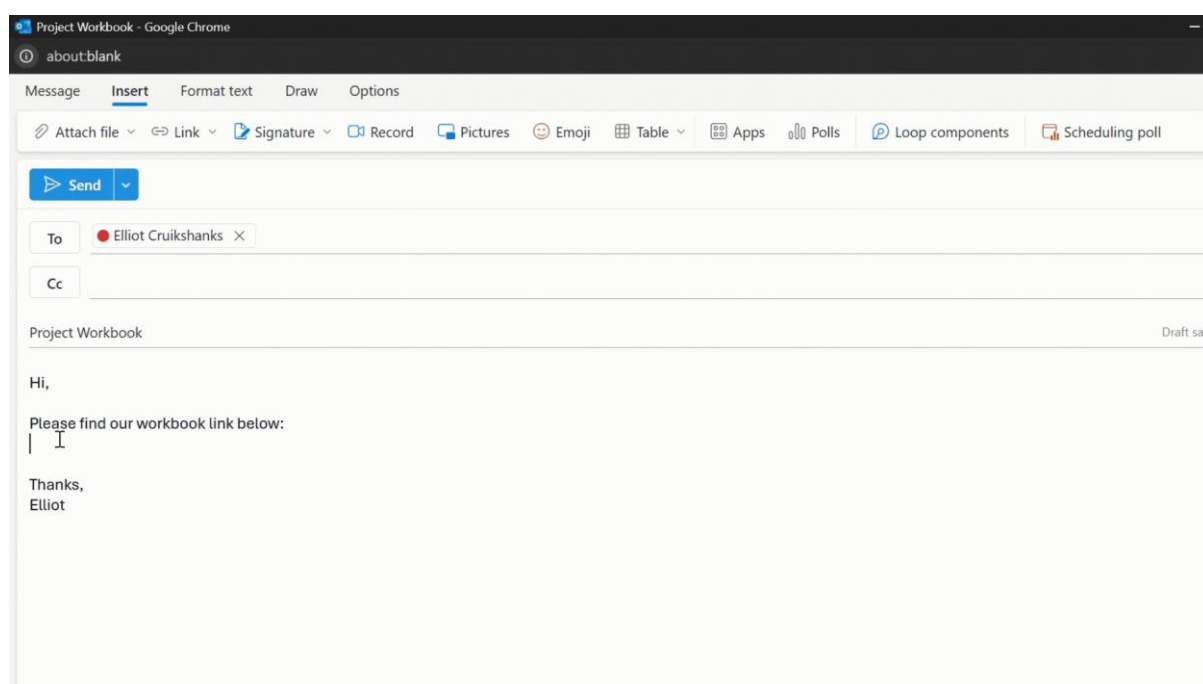
Pros and cons of direct attachment:

- ✓ Simple – No extra accounts or storage needed.
- ✓ Works offline – The recipient can open the file without internet access.
- ✗ Large files may fail – Many email providers limit attachments (e.g., 25MB in Outlook/Gmail).
- ✗ No automatic updates – If you edit the file later, the recipient won't see changes.

Method 2: Sharing a link to a file

If you're working with large files, undertaking collaborative work, or using files you may update later, it's best to share a link to a file. To share a link to a file:

- Upload the file to your cloud storage (e.g., OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox). Be mindful of where your file is stored if you're collaborating with others!
- Compose a new email in Outlook
- Select 'Insert' from the pane at the top of the screen, then 'Attach File'.
- Select the file from your cloud provider and click 'Okay'. If you're using Outlook and OneDrive, you may have the option to 'Share Link' or 'Attach' – to swap between the two, use the downward facing arrow as seen below.
- When the link is ready, click it to set permissions (e.g., "Can view" or "Can edit").
- Send the link via email.



Pros and cons of linking to a file:

- ✓ No size limits – Works for large files (e.g., videos, datasets).
- ✓ Real-time updates – Changes sync automatically for all viewers.
- ✓ Better security – You can revoke access later if needed.
- ✗ Requires internet – Recipients need to be online to view the file.
- ✗ May need an account – Some services require sign-in to access files.

Which method should you use?

Situation	Best Choice
Sending a small, final document	Attachment
Sharing large files (e.g., videos)	Link
Collaborating on a live document	Link
Sending to someone with slow/limited access to the internet	Attachment (if small)

Security tips for file sharing

When sharing files, it's important to ensure your recipient will be able to access your files. Consider:

- For attachments – avoid sensitive data (use password protection if necessary)
- For links - set expiration dates if sharing confidential files
- Always double-check permissions (e.g., "View only" vs. "Edit").

By choosing the correct method, you can share files efficiently and securely.