

Where do Outlook's auto-complete suggestions come from?

[http://ask-leo.com/where do outlooks autocomplete suggestions come from.html](http://ask-leo.com/where_do_outlooks_autocomplete_suggestions_come_from.html)

Outlook's autocomplete feature attempts to be helpful by suggesting email names that are similar to what you're typing. A couple of keystrokes, an autocomplete suggestion, and you don't have to type the entire email name every time. Seems both simple, and handy.

Unfortunately it's not quite simple, and it can be both handy, and frustrating, because email names you expect to be present aren't, and those that you never want to look at again keep popping up.

A little bit of understanding, and a few tips, will go a long way to making this feature more helpful.

To answer the question, the auto-complete suggestions come from something called the nickname list, and your address book. Usually.

The nickname list is something the Outlook builds over time as you send and receive email. Essentially it collects all the email addresses that you've sent email to as they've appeared in the To, Cc or Bcc fields. That's Outlook's first source of autocomplete suggestions.

Outlook also appears to sometimes take suggestions from your address book. It's unclear exactly when it decides to, or rather when it decides not to ... it might be related to how many suggestions it was able to find in the nickname list. Regardless, what's important is that entries in your address book are not always presented.

It's frustrating to type the first few characters of someone's name, *knowing* that they're in your address book ... but they don't show.

There is a solution.

Press **CTRL+K**.

Ctrl+K is a shortcut for the "Check Names" button, also on the toolbar when you're composing a message. Check names will look at the characters you've typed so far and compare them to your address book entries. If there's only one match, it completes the entry. If there's more than one match, it presents a list for you to choose from. And the list will *not* include items from the nickname list. But the name you just entered will get added to the nickname list, so the next time you use it, it should be there.

Personally, I think it's more confusing that it needs to be. But there it is.

By the way, deleting an address from the nickname list is also very easy: when you see it being suggested, use the up or down arrow keys to highlight it, and then press delete.

The nickname list that outlook maintains can occasionally become corrupt. To repair it, or to reset it completely, Microsoft has provided [this knowledgebase article](#).