

Managing LDS Missionary Google Accounts

A short guide for missionaries and parents. Storage is limited, extra space cannot be purchased on the Church account, and the account is deleted after release. Plan the backup early—not in the last week.

Independent guidance from Print My Mission

This guide is published by Print My Mission (printmymission.com) to help families keep mission photos, email, and files. It is not made, provided, approved, or endorsed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Intellectual Reserve, Inc. Follow your mission president's device standards. Current missionaries should also use the Church's Missionary Support / ServiceNow articles.

What is actually true

Topic	Verified status
Storage amount	Working figure is about 30 GB per missionary.org account, shared across Gmail, Drive, and Photos. Some accounts have shown 40 GB during temporary Church accommodations. The "10 GB per 6 months" formula (18 mo = 30 GB, 24 mo = 40 GB) is not independently confirmed as official policy. Check the live quota in the account.
Buy more space?	No. Missionary.org accounts are managed Workspace accounts. Google One personal or family plans cannot be applied to them.
Photos "unlimited"?	No. Google ended free unlimited High quality / Storage saver backups on June 1, 2021. Photos and videos count against the same 30 GB pool as email and Drive.
Sharing = backup?	No. Sharing a folder or album does not transfer ownership. If the missionary account is deleted, files it owns disappear unless they were copied or auto-saved into another account.
After release	As of the Church's Dec 2025 notice, missionary.org accounts expire 60 days after release (policy in effect beginning March 8, 2026; previously 90 days). Export before that window closes.

Do this first — check the real number

On the missionary phone or a computer signed into the missionary.org account: Gmail menu → Settings → the account → Manage storage (or visit one.google.com/storage while signed in). Use that number, not a rumor.

Why 30-40 GB disappears so fast

Gmail, Drive, and Photos share one pool. A few modern Samsung videos can burn through more space than a year of plain email. The usual culprits:

- Emailing uncompressed photos and videos to companions, the district, or home. The file lives in Sent mail and again in every missionary.org Inbox that received it. Two or three people forwarding the same transfer video can store it many times.
- Using Drive as a locker for videos, music, movies, or large PDFs. Parents sending a music folder into the missionary Drive also charges that quota. Share a view-only folder from a parent account instead.
- Google Photos backing up everything on the phone—bursts, screenshots, WhatsApp saves, and 4K clips—at Original quality.

- Trash and Spam. Deleted mail and Drive/Photos items still count until Trash is emptied.

Text-only weekly letters are cheap. Attachments and video are not. Send an album link instead of attaching the files.

The strategy that works

Treat the missionary.org account as a temporary workspace, not a permanent archive.

1. Use Google Photos the right way

Photos is the right home for pictures—not Gmail attachments and not a Drive dump. It is not unlimited. Everything backed up there counts against the same 30 GB.

- Turn on backup in the Google Photos app signed into missionary.org so new camera shots leave the phone.
- Set backup quality to Storage Saver (not Original). New photos compress to about 16 MP and video to 1080p. That still counts against quota, but it grows much slower. Original quality on a Samsung camera fills the account in weeks.
- Do not treat a shared album as a backup. Sharing leaves ownership on the missionary account. When that account is deleted, the album dies unless copies were saved elsewhere.
- Partner Share to a personal Google account: on missionary.org Photos, Settings → Partner sharing → share All photos from the start of the mission. On the personal account, accept the invite and set Save to your account → All photos (Auto-save). Confirm the cloud-check mark before deleting anything.
- After Auto-save is confirmed, delete bulky videos and unwanted bursts from the missionary Photos library to free space. Test with a few files first.
- Keep Original quality on the personal account if you want full-resolution copies. Put Google One storage on that personal account, not on missionary.org.

Important: Auto-saved Partner Share copies do not count against the personal account while sharing stays on. When the missionary account is later deleted and sharing ends, those saved copies become real files on the personal account and will count against its storage. Buy enough Google One space on the personal account before release.

2. Keep a second, offline copy

- If the mission phone has a microSD slot and the mission allows it, save camera originals to a name-brand endurance card (SanDisk, Samsung, Lexar). Periodically copy the card or mail a clone home.
- Parents can also download albums from the personal account to a computer or another cloud (OneDrive, iCloud, external drive). Two copies in two places beats one “clever” share.

3. Stop email from eating the quota

- Archive does not free space. Only permanent delete does—empty Trash and Spam.
- Do not attach photos or videos to weekly emails—or to other missionaries. Send a Google Photos album link instead.
- Delete large attachments and newsletters the missionary does not need. Search Gmail for has:attachment or larger:5M.
- Empty Google Drive and Photos trash as well. Trash still counts until it is emptied or auto-purged.

Email forwarding to a personal inbox is not a reliable official storage plan. During the mission, missionaries are directed to use the assigned missionary.org account. After release, use the Church’s export / POP instructions or Google Takeout while the account is still open.

4. Organize without wasting space

- Labels and folders help finding mail; they do not reduce storage.
- Parents should not dump music, movies, or large PDFs into the missionary Drive. Share a view-only folder from a parent account instead—the owner’s storage pays for it.
- Check storage monthly on preparation day. A 10-minute cleanup beats a locked, read-only account.

What not to do

- **Do not** buy Google One on the missionary.org login. It will not attach extra quota to a Church-managed account.
- **Do not** rely on “High quality / unlimited Photos.” That program ended in 2021.
- **Do not** assume a shared album or shared Drive folder will survive account deletion. Copy or auto-save first.
- **Do not** email raw photos or videos to other missionaries. Each recipient’s Inbox stores another full copy.
- **Do not** use missionary Drive as a music or video locker.
- **Do not** wait until the last week of the mission. Video from modern Samsung phones fills tens of gigabytes quickly.
- **Do not** leave files only in Trash. They still count, and Trash empties automatically.

End-of-mission checklist

Start this before release. After release you have a short window (now 60 days under the current Church notice).

1. Photos: Confirm Auto-save completed. Spot-check that key days and videos exist in the personal library, not only under Sharing.
2. Drive: Download needed Docs, Sheets, and files, or copy them into a personal Drive folder (use Make a copy / Download—not just Share).
3. Gmail: Use Google Takeout (takeout.google.com) while still signed in, and/or the official post-release POP transfer the Church documents for departing missionaries.
4. Keep notes: Copy important notes to a Doc or the personal account. Keep is easy to forget.
5. Phone: Copy the microSD card and any local My Files folders before the device is reset or turned in.
6. Deadline: If the account already closed, some missionaries can briefly extend access via mail.missionary.org → Church Account → Extend Access. Do not count on this.

Quick monthly routine (5–10 minutes)

Week 1	Check storage bar. If over ~70%, delete already-saved videos first.
Week 2	Empty Gmail Trash/Spam and Drive/Photos trash.
Week 3	On the personal account, confirm new photos auto-saved.
Week 4	Parents download a backup of new albums to a computer or second cloud.

Sources and limits of this guide

Compiled August 2026 by Print My Mission from Church Tech Forum posts by Church employees and experienced volunteers, the Church’s departing-missionary account-retention notice (Dec 2025 / 60-day window), Google’s published Photos and Workspace storage rules, and long-running family write-ups. This is Print My Mission guidance—not an official Church publication. Official in-mission cleanup articles live on Church ServiceNow and are visible only to current missionaries. Learn more at printmymission.com.