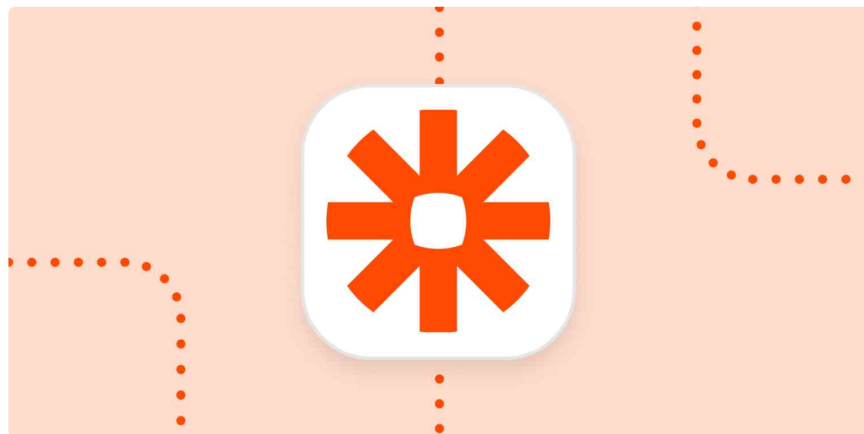


[Automation inspiration](#) 7 min read

9 things you never thought about automating—but totally should

By Kristie Wirth · November 1, 2021



When people think of Zapier, often they think about creating automated workflows for small business tasks, like accounting work or filling out spreadsheets. Of course, this is what Zapier does best—helping folks automate monotonous work tasks—but it's not *all* that can be done. With thousands of integrations, the sky's the limit.

I've [written previously](#) about some of the ways I've used automation in my personal life to do things like remembering to check in for my flights or improving my relationship with my sister. But a data scientist never sleeps (okay, that's not quite true), and I keep finding fresh, new ways to connect apps I use every day, saving me time and getting even more out of my life. So here are nine more of my favorite Zaps that I hope will inspire you to seek out automation opportunities in your own life.

This blog post was adapted from a session given at ZapConnect, Zapier's user conference. Visit [this page](#) to watch Kristie's session, "You can automate that?".

1. Make a vacation to-do list

The screenshot shows a Zap configuration titled "Make a vacation to-do list" by Kristie Wirth. The trigger is "When Event added to Google Calendar containing the word 'flight'". The actions are: "Do this Create task - 'Book lodging for {{flight_date}} trip'", "Do this Subtract 4 days from flight time", "Do this Delay until {{4_days_before_flight}}", and "Do this Create task - 'Pack for {{flight_date}} trip'". A note says "You can put more Todoist create task steps here!".

This goody might not automatically check you in for your flight, pack your bags, and line up a ride to the airport, but it will save you time and heartache by creating a personalized list of tasks whenever you schedule travel. There are certain tasks I do *every time* I go on vacation or work trips—and they can fall through the cracks when I'm in a rush. To make sure they don't, I created a Zap to automate the process.

The Zap fires when I add the word "flight" to a [Google Calendar](#) event, but you can set up your own keyword, or even use a trigger from another app like [Gmail](#). The key is to pick a convention and stick with it.

Each action step in this Zap creates new tasks in [Todoist](#), like scheduling car parking at the airport, setting up dog-sitting, booking the lodging for my trip, requesting out-of-office time and updating my calendar. In the final action, however, I use [Formatter by Zapier](#) to subtract four days from the flight date and delay the last task—packing for the trip—until that new date.

Pro tip: include dates and links in the task names to save even more time. It all adds up!

You can [copy my Zap](#)—which includes the steps to get that last task delayed until four days before the flight—or start with something like this:

The image shows four Zapier Zap templates arranged vertically. Each template consists of a trigger icon, a connector icon, a description, and a 'Use this Zap' button.

- Template 1:** Trigger: Google Calendar (calendar icon with '31'). Action: Todoist (red envelope icon). Description: 'Add new Google Calendar events that match a search as Todoist tasks'.
- Template 2:** Trigger: Google Calendar (calendar icon with '31'). Action: Google Tasks (blue pencil icon). Description: 'Create Google Tasks for new Google Calendar events matching a search'.
- Template 3:** Trigger: Microsoft Outlook (blue envelope icon with 'O'). Action: Todoist (red envelope icon). Description: 'Add new Microsoft Outlook events to Todoist as tasks'.
- Template 4:** Trigger: Microsoft Outlook (blue envelope icon with 'O'). Action: Microsoft To-Do (blue checkmark icon). Description: 'Create tasks in Microsoft To-Do from new calendar events in Microsoft Outlook'.

See more [Google Calendar](#) and [Todoist](#) integrations powered by [zapier*](#)

2. Keep up with new content from favorite people

The image is a screenshot of a Zapier Zap configuration page. On the left, there is a preview of an email titled 'New content from my favorite people' with a sample text about actor Ryan Reynolds. On the right, the Zap configuration steps are shown:

- When:** New item on movie RSS feed ([comingsoon.net](#))
- Do this:** Only continue if description contains one of my favorite people
- Do this:** Split off long "Related content:" section at the end of the description
- Do this:** Append entry to digest
- Do this:** Email myself digest of all new content every Friday

The bottom right corner of the configuration area shows 'ZapConnect 2021 | zapier'.

I'm a movie buff, but like most people, my tastes are idiosyncratic—there are certain actors, directors, and studios I prefer. To separate the wheat from the chaff, I use a Zap to create a weekly email of upcoming movies personalized to my tastes. The automation begins whenever a new item is added to the RSS feed from [comingsoon.net](#). But then I use Zapier's [Filter](#) to include only content descriptions containing my favorite actors and directors,

the words "Marvel" or "superhero" and—of course—anything from Pixar.

Often, this feed contains a section of "related content" for each entry, so I use a Formatter step to split the text at the word "related" and only keep the original content. Once I've got exactly what I want, I [append the entry to a weekly digest](#) that sends an email to me every Friday afternoon.

This Zap has been so useful that I've created three separate versions: the original new movie feed, a "streaming content" feed, and a Netflix-specific feed. The great thing is all three are collected in that one Friday digest so I'm ready to binge-watch over the weekend.

To start, you need to set up the Zap to [create the custom digest](#)—make one for each website whose content you're following—then use a second Zap to [release your combined digest](#).

3. Create a spreadsheet of movies to watch

You can automate that?

Create spreadsheet of movies to watch

Title	Description	Trailer	Release Date	Estimated Streaming Date
Johnson & Gaddis & Reynolds in Action Comedy 'Red Notice' Trailer	"You've become the world's most wanted criminals - and I'm the only one who can bring you in." Netflix has launched the first season trailer for a big action comedy movie arriving in November this year called Red Notice, featuring a trio of world famous actors: Dwayne Johnson, Gal Gadot, and Ryan Reynolds. The title is a reference to an Interspecies 'Red Notice' - the highest level warrant to hunt & capture the world's most wanted. When a daring heist brings together the top FBI profiler (Dwayne Johnson) and two rival criminals (Gal Gadot, Ryan Reynolds), there's no telling what	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88027r3y6f8&list=PL8027r3y6f8	November 12th, 2021	January 21, 2022

Kristie Wirth

ZapConnect 2021 | zapier

- When** New item on movie trailer RSS feed (*firstshowing.net*)
- Do this** Only continue if description contains one of my favorite people
- Do this** Use regular expressions to parse out release date & YouTube trailer link
- Do this** Add 70 days to release date
- Do this** Add all movies details to spreadsheet

While the previous fleet of Zaps is great for movie news, it doesn't help me track the dates of film openings or when movies start their streaming lives. That's the job of a spreadsheet, right? So, I have an automation that triggers whenever a new movie trailer is added to the [firstshowing.net](#) RSS feed. And once again, I use Filter to include only the content I'm interested in.

The tricky part is extracting details like the date or trailer URL from the content. If you've ever done coding, you are probably familiar

with [regular expressions](#). I employ regular expressions in Python—using the [Code by Zapier](#) step—to parse those details and pass them along to my upcoming movie list in [Google Sheets](#). (If you've never coded before, you can also learn to [use regular expressions in a Formatter step instead](#))

Interesting tidbit: According to Google, a movie starts streaming an average of about 70 days from its opening. I use [Formatter by Zapier](#) to add 70 days to the opening, creating an approximate streaming date so I can filter my spreadsheet for likely at-home viewing candidates.

Here's a copy of [my Zap](#), if you'd like to try it for yourself.

4. Get package delivery notifications by text

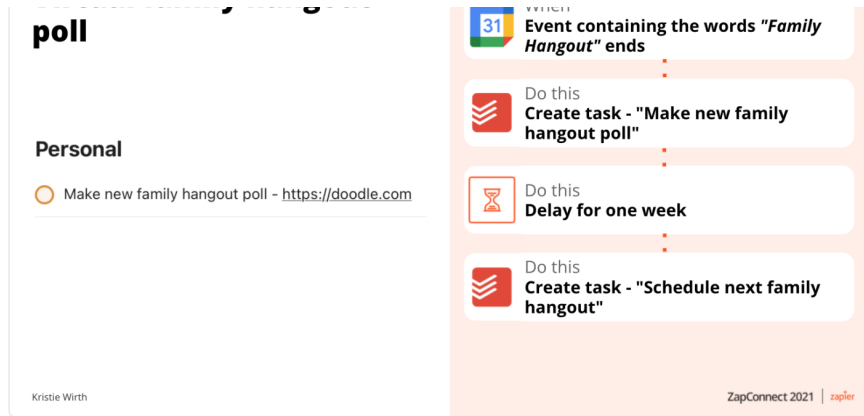
The screenshot shows a Zapier Zap configuration for "Package delivery notifications". The trigger is "When Receive an email with the subject 'USPS Item Delivered'". The action is "Do this Send a text that I've received a package". The trigger email is from "auto-reply@usps.com" with the subject "USPS® Item Delivered, Front DoorPorch". The action is a text message from "Kristie Wirth" that says "Your package has been delivered!".

Some of my most useful Zaps are incredibly simple. I signed up for [package delivery alerts](#) from USPS, which sends me an automatic email with the subject line "Subject: USPS® Item Delivered." Since I don't check email frequently, I use the new email as a trigger for a Zap that [instantly sends me a text message](#). Here's another tip: You can use Gmail's own internal filters to mark the emails as read so they don't clutter up your inbox.

If you think this sounds useful, you can [try my Zap](#).

5. Manage virtual family hangouts

The screenshot shows the beginning of a Zapier Zap configuration for "Virtual family hangout". The trigger is "When" and the action is partially visible.

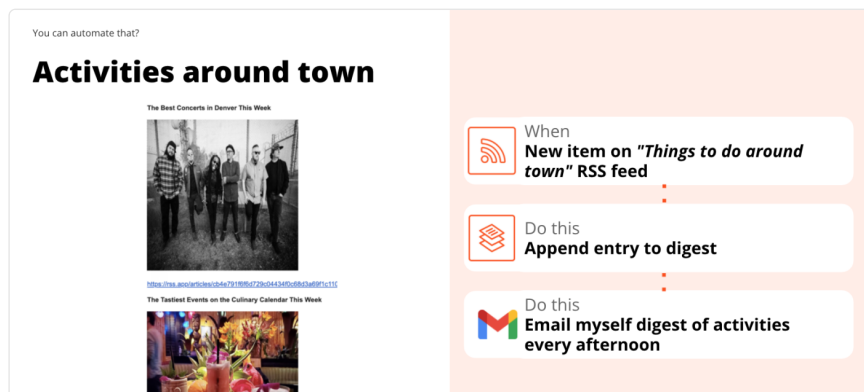


My far-flung family started doing a monthly video chat to catch up with each other, but it was always painful trying to schedule the next hangout (recurring events don't work with my busy relatives). So I created a Zap that triggers whenever a calendar entry named "Family Hangout" ends. The first action is a reminder in my Todoist app to make a [Doodle](#) poll of times for the next family hangout. Then I add a [Delay](#) step to give everyone a week to respond. The final action step creates another Todoist task to schedule a Google Calendar for the best day.

If you have a sibling who never responds to the first Doodle email, you can schedule an automatic follow-up reminder. But why not go one better and use a multi-step Zap that:

1. Searches for a recent email that confirms your sibling "participated in the Doodle poll;"
2. Continues only if no email was found; and
3. Sends an automated email to that sibling that says, "Don't forget to vote in the poll!"

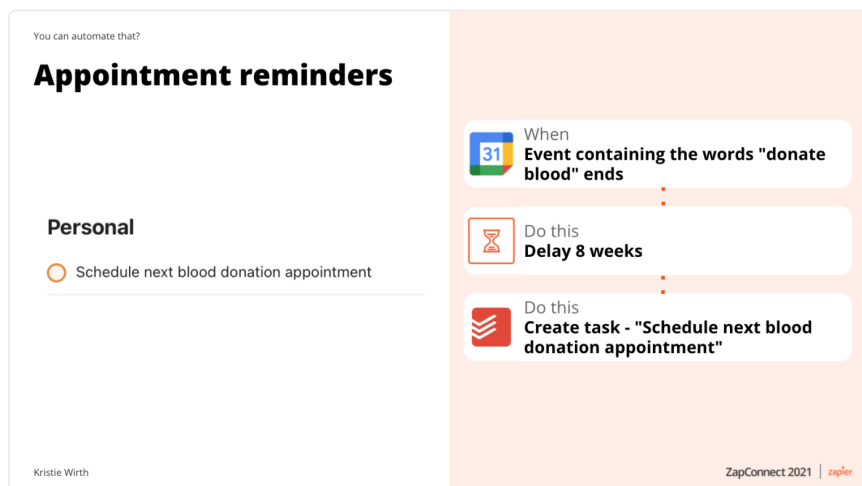
6. Know what activities are happening around town





There's a section of our local news website that regularly posts about fun activities to do around town, but the frequent email notifications the site sent were often overwhelming. So, I created a custom RSS feed (using [Fetchrss.com](#)) and set up a Zap to trigger whenever a new post is added to the website. Each entry is appended to a daily digest that I receive each afternoon. Give [the Zap](#) a try.

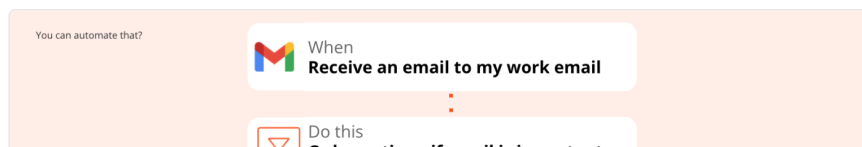
7. Never forget to schedule an appointment

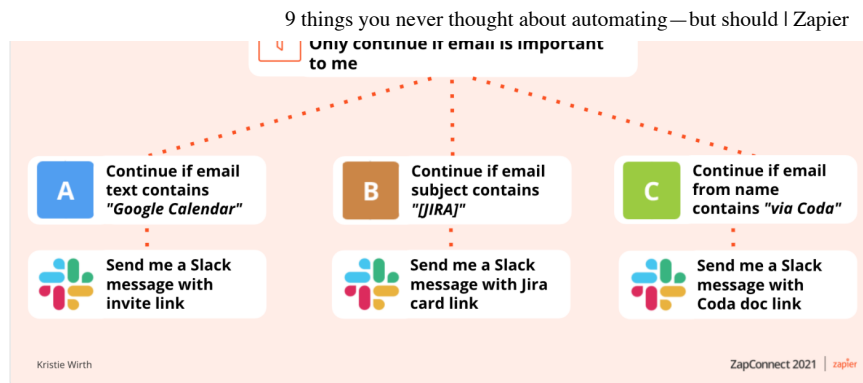


There's a whole category of events that need to be scheduled on a regular basis, like dog grooming and dentist appointments. I like to donate blood regularly, so I created a Zap that triggers every time a calendar event with the keywords "donate blood" ends. I use Delay to hold the reminder for eight weeks and then add a Todoist task to remind me to book my next donation. You can [try this Zap yourself](#), by copying my Zap.

Of course, I do use Zaps in my professional life as well. Here are two more automations that have really improved my workday.

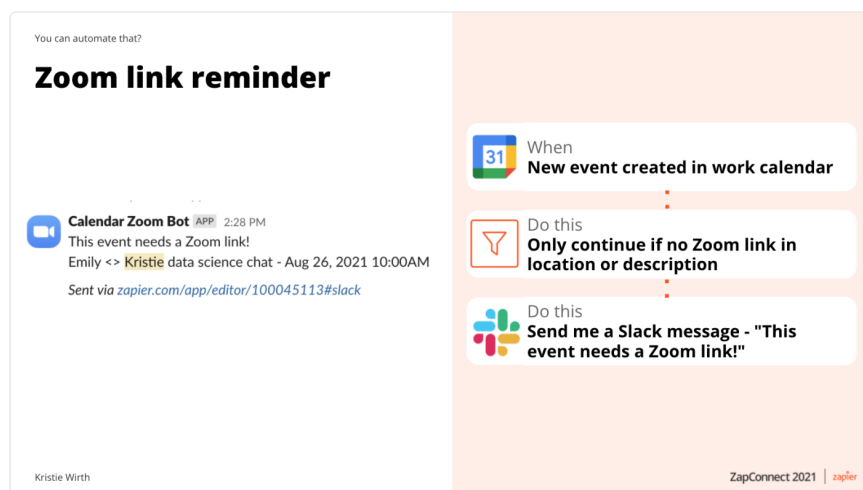
8. Send notifications from email to Slack





I work in [Slack](#), and I like all my messages in once place. I've created a Zap that processes my email and filters out those that don't require action on my part (like declined Google Calendar events or PR merge notifications from [GitHub](#)). Then I use [Paths by Zapier](#) (available on the Professional Plan tier) to customize the new Slack message for the email messages I need to act on. As an example, if an email text contains "Google Calendar," I use [Formatter](#) to change the icon of the message sent, extract the calendar invite link and display the most relevant content to preview. If the original email contains "[JIRA]" in the subject line, the [Formatter](#) step customizes the Slack message to include the [Jira](#) icon, a text snippet and ticket link. With [Paths](#) conditional logic and filtering, the sky's the limit for this Zap.

9. Zoom link reminder



Our work meetings are held on [Zoom](#), so it's best to include Zoom meetings link directly inside calendar invites. Of course, I sometimes forget to do this when I schedule meetings, so I wanted to create an automatic reminder for those occasions. The Zap

triggers whenever I create a new event in my work calendar, but I filter it on three required criteria. The Zap will only continue if:

1. The invite's location does not include "Zoom"
2. The invite's description does not include "Zoom"
3. The invite's summary does not include "Out of Office" (since these would never need Zoom links)

If all three conditions hold, the Zap sends me a Slack message reminding me to add the Zoom link. Here's a [Zap you can copy](#) to try this yourself.

Automation isn't just for work—it's for you

I hope you find some of these ideas useful, or as a spark for your own creative automations. At the very least, try to notice the things you do on a recurring basis and see if you can find a way to automate the process. Whether it's a personal task, and silly idea, or a work process, Zapier can help free up your time to focus on the things in life that matter most to you.

Related reading:

- [Automation for busy families](#)
- [Inject joy into your day with automation](#)
- [Fight work burnout with automation](#)

Get productivity tips delivered straight to your inbox

We'll email you 1/wk, and never share your information.

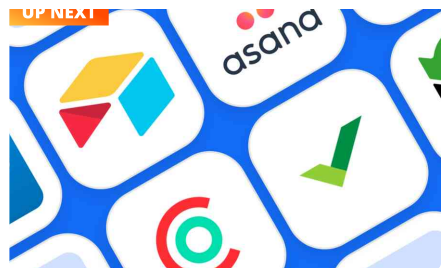


Kristie Wirth

Kristie Wirth is a Data Scientist at Zapier and lives in Denver, CO. Some of her favorite things include cooking complicated new recipes, playing lots of board games, and hanging out with her awesome dog.

TAGS

[Automation](#)[ZapConnect](#)

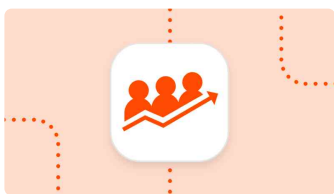


Best apps

The best project management software for small businesses in 2021

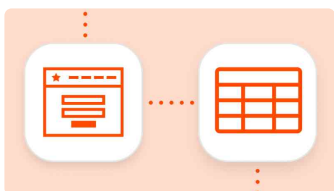
Managing projects in a small business setting can be even more challenging than doing so within a larger company. A big business might have a project manager for marketing, another for sales, another for product development.

Related articles



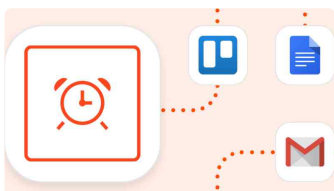
[Zapier tutorials](#)

How to automatically keep track of your contacts for easier reporting



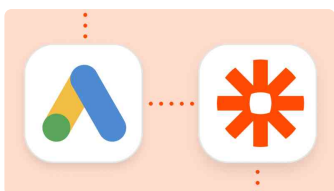
[Zapier tutorials](#)

How to send form and ticket information to a spreadsheet for better analysis



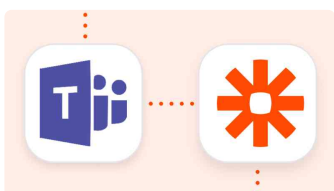
[Zapier feature guides](#)

Automate your schedule: How to wrangle your recurring tasks with Zapier



[Zapier tutorials](#)

Use Google Ads with Zapier to increase ROI



[Zapier tutorials](#)


How to use Zapier within Microsoft Teams


Improve your productivity

automatically. Use Zapier to get your apps working together.

[Sign up](#)

[See how it works](#)

 **Step 1**
New Lead

 **Step 2**
Notify team

[Pricing](#) [Help](#) [Developer Platform](#) [Press](#) [Jobs](#) [Zapier for Companies](#)

Follow us     

zapier^{*} makes you happier :)

© 2021 Zapier Inc. [Manage cookies](#) | [Legal](#) | [Privacy](#)