Comparison of POP and IMAP

The following table lists some common e-mail tasks and compares how they are carried out with the POP protocol to how they're carried out with the IMAP protocol:

	POP	IMAP
What does it stand for?	Post Office Protocol	Internet Message Access Protocol
Which protocol would suit me best?	If you access mail using only one computer e.g. your office PC or a laptop.	If you want to access your mail from multiple computers or locations.
Which mail programs can I use?	All mail programs or clients have POP capability	Most mail programs have IMAP capability and you will also be able to access your mail via a web page using any web browser.
Some Common Tasks:		
Check for incoming mail	By default, incoming messages are transferred to your local machine when you check your incoming mail. Only new messages are available if you connect to the server using a PC other than your normal one. You are connected to the server only for the transfer of messages.	By default, incoming messages stay on the server when you check your mail - only headers are transferred with full messages only downloaded when selected for reading. All your messages are always available no matter where or how you connect to the server. You remain connected to the server whilst you deal with mail but some clients allow for off-line working.
Read and respond to mail	Reading and responding to messages is done on your local machine.	You can read and respond to messages directly on the server but you can also read and respond to messages on your local machine, after downloading for offline working (depending on client). When you reconnect, your mailboxes are resynchronised to reflect the changes you have made.
Create mailboxes	Creating mailboxes can be done only	You can create mailboxes directly on

for storing messages	on your local machine.	the server. By default, an Inbox is automatically created on the server when you begin using IMAP. The Inbox functions as the master mailbox (or folder) as well as the mailbox for incoming messages. All other mailboxes, including a trash box, need to be created within the Inbox.
Move messages in and out of mailboxes	You can move messages in and out of mailboxes only on your local machine.	You can move messages in and out of mailboxes on the server and on your local machine.
Transfer messages from local machine to server and vice versa	You cannot transfer any messages from your local machine to the server. Messages are automatically transferred from the server to your local machine when you check your incoming mail.	You can transfer individual messages from mailboxes on your local machine into mailboxes on the server and vice versa.
Delete selected messages on the server	When using some clients (e.g. Eudora), if you specified to leave messages on the server, you can delete individual messages left there.	You can delete individual messages and groups of messages directly on the server as well as on your local machine.