

How to

...email

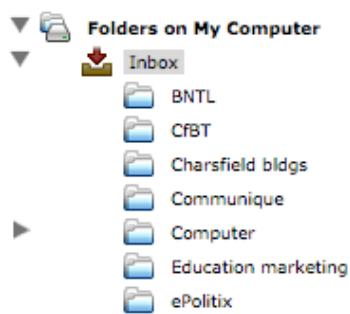
Quick, easy, free and often very, very useful. OK, so email is great and most users don't know how they would manage without it. It can also become a nightmare of lost messages, failed replies, hurt feelings and even court cases. This sheet gives you some hints on how to get all the good stuff about email without the bad things happening.

Getting organised

In most email applications, every message that is sent or received is automatically stored in either the *Sent Items* or *Inbox* folder. That's great - everything is filed! But after a while, those folders fill up with mail and it becomes increasingly difficult to find the message you are after.

Those problems can be avoided quite easily by being just a bit organised.

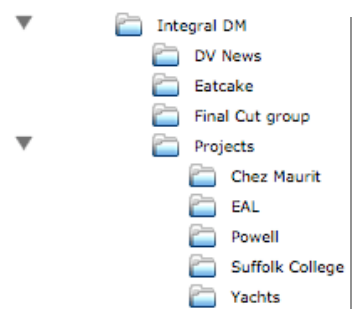
Folders



The first and most basic way of organising your mail is to set up folders. These might be for each person or organisation that you regularly communicate with by email. These are all folders in my *Inbox*.

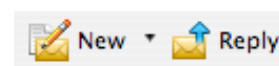
If you want, you can set up similar folders in your *Sent Items* folder.

Don't forget that folders can nest sub-folders, so you might set up sub-folders under a contact to take mail concerning specific topics. Clicking on the disclosure button will hide or show the sub-folders. Sometimes it can be really important to find an email quickly. Setting up a simple folder system can be a great help.



Threads

There is another really neat way of keeping messages in order. When you reply to a message, you can either start a new message or click on Reply.



A new, clean message may look neater, but there are big advantages in using Reply. The original message will be pushed down the page and a space is created for you to write your reply at the top.

It may seem a bit daft having the reply above the original message but really it makes good sense. It is the first message your recipient will see when they open your email and they can refer down to the original message if they need to. It also makes it really clear what you are replying to.

If they then reply to you, the same thing happens again, so that as the message pings backwards and forwards, the whole thread of messages is kept together, in time order, on the one email. This means that you don't have to find lots of different messages to check over the thread of the conversation. How cool is that?

Etiquette

Even in the world of business, the style and language of email have changed into something quite different from traditional business letters.

Sometimes it is almost a halfway point between a letter and a text message. Certainly, the openings and endings are quite different.

11 January 2006

Mr. Peter Lincoln
Podulus Limited
Rushden Road
Bristol
BS56 8GG



1234 Snowy Road
Derby, D1 45678-9102
315-555-1212
fax: 315-555-1313

Dear Mr. Lincoln

Recently, my colleague Sean was working with some audio material that I believe originated from you, possibly a podcast? I have a client who wants to produce an audio CD, could you recommend someone to produce it?

From: Jon
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2006 09:23:29 +0000
To: Peter
Subject: Audio supplier

Hi Peter,

Recently sean was working with some audio material

Mind your language

It is generally accepted that using less stuffy language and being much more to the point in email is a good thing. BUT, many people are much less tolerant of poor spelling and grammar. Short cuts and abbreviations may be fine for text messages and email between friends, but they are not acceptable in most mainstream business communication - even using email.

Email is still relatively new and different conventions are developing in different organisations. When you start using email at work, take a few minutes to look at some examples of the sorts of emails that go out to clients, to other people in the organisation and between colleagues. It will give you a feel for the tone and style that you should use.

If you ask your supervisor or manager to give you some hints on email style, you can be sure that they will appreciate your effort to fit in.

Email tips

There are several conventions to be aware of in business email.

- Check your mail regularly and reply promptly, even if only to say you've got the message and will reply as soon as possible.
- Keep messages brief. If you have a lot to say, it may be better to attach a word-processed document that the recipient can print to read.
- Make sure that the subject of your message is clearly stated in the Subject box. That subject will carry on through all replies and forwards.
- If you have a number of subjects to raise, think about sending separate messages so that each subject has its own thread.
- Writing whole phrases or messages in CAPITAL LETTERS IS SEEN AS SHOUTING, so use capitals with great care.
- Take care about how you express yourself - especially if you are making a quick reply to something you feel strongly about. Your message may be forwarded to people you don't know and may cause offence or worse. Remember that the laws of defamation, copyright, obscenity, fraudulent misrepresentation, freedom of information, and wrongful discrimination apply just as much to email as to any other written communication.
- Remember you can use spell-check in emails too.



Reply All button

Sometimes you will get an email that has been sent to tens or even hundreds of people. The recipients will show up in the To: section at the top of the message.



Hi

To facilitate us in putting the programme together for the two-day development event scheduled to take place next month, we now need confirmation of your attendance/or not at the two-day development event scheduled to

This message needed a simple reply to the sender. The Reply button  is right next to the Reply All button  and they look very similar. Check what Reply All means and work out how many emails would have been clogging up inboxes if all 74 recipients had accidentally hit the Reply All button!

Undo does nothing after it is sent!

Everything seems to happen so fast with email. It seems to arrive anywhere in the world almost before it is sent! No, it's not quite that quick, but you know what we mean.

This is great but it doesn't give you any thinking time. When you write a letter to send by post, naturally, you'll read it through before you put it in an envelope and post it. At every stage you have time to think, *Did I say the right things in the right way?* With email the temptation is to finish writing and hit the Send button right away. Even before you've checked:

- Is the message clear with correct spelling and grammar?
- Is the subject line correct? And worst of all...
- Is it being sent to the right person?

It always happens when you are in a hurry, but unlike most other software, there is no magic Undo button to bring the email back.

Your messages will travel at the speed of light, so you can afford to take your time and take care before sending them.

Signatures

You can set up a signature to go at the bottom of your email messages. This bit of specially formatted content might include your name and your telephone number. You can also include pictures - perhaps a logo or even a written signature. One word of warning, though: get someone else to write your signature in a completely different style to your real signature - that way it is worthless to fraudsters.

Format

To put pictures into your email or to format text, you'll need to select the HTML format for the message. The fact that this makes a slightly bigger file is not really a problem these days with high-speed internet connections.

Attachments

Attaching documents, pictures and MP3 files is as simple as dragging the file to the message. However, very large attachments can cause delivery to fail to some recipients whose internet service provider (ISP) limits the size of attachments allowed.

Ask about ways to reduce the size of pictures so that they can be sent quickly by email.