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Telegraph Netw

Boot camp : **Archive**

Bootcamp 268: Outlook Express - hints and tips
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COMPLETE BOOTCAMP ARCHIVE

Top traumas solved by Rick Maybury

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In the third of our Hints and Tips specials, we focus on good old Outlook Express. As usual, most of these tips are intended for the latest version of the program (OE6) but most of them will also work with version 5.

Despite everything, Outlook Express is still one of the best email and newsgroup "client" programs.

It's free, easy to use and very flexible but like Internet Explorer - of which it is an integral part - its security features are being constantly attacked, so make sure that you have the latest updates and patches from Microsoft and ensure that your anti-virus software is kept up to date.

If you're ultra-cautious it's worth disabling the Preview pane, which automatically opens emails, possibly activating a virus. To do that, go to View>Layout and uncheck "Show Preview Pane".

We'll begin with a little-known feature in Outlook Express that may be of interest to anyone wanting to keep a discrete track of the email activity on a PC, and it can also come in useful for solving connection problems.

OE has a number of "logging" features that can

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Internet Explorer [containing Outlook Express]
- OEHelp.com
- Mail Washer
- Outlook Express Backup Wizard
- Support - Poweroid.com
- International IT company database - Poweroid
- Drivers, driver downloads - Poweroid
- Support - Symantec
- Support - Microsoft
- Technical database (knowledge base) - Microsoft

be enabled by going to Options on the Tools menu.

Click the Maintenance tab and go to the Troubleshooting section at the bottom. Check the activity that you want to log and click OK.

The logs are very detailed and can be read in Notepad or any text or word processor program. You’ll find them in the main message folder, which in the case of Windows 98 will be in:C:\WINDOWS\ApplicationData\Identities\{GUID}\Microsoft\Outlook Express, (where GUID or Global Unique Identifier is a long string of letters and numbers).

In Windows XP the location is: C:\Documents and Settings\<yourname>ApplicationData\Identities\{GUID}\Microsoft\Outlook Express.

The folder holding all of your mail messages could be vulnerable if you suffer a hard disk failure, or you have to reinstall Windows. Fortunately, Outlook Express will let you change the location of your message store folder.

Go to Options on the Tools menu and select the Maintenance tab. Click the Store Folder button, then Change and choose a folder outside of Windows, a separate disc partition or even a second hard disk drive.

Unfortunately, OE won’t allow you to move your message folder to a removable disk or a network drive. Supposedly, it can be done, but it involves a lot of fiddling with the Windows Registry.

The files contained in the Outlook Express message folder cannot be easily read by other applications so it’s important to back up important messages, just in case something bad happens.

This is not as easy as it sounds as OE doesn’t have any built-in archiving facilities, but there is a simple workaround.

Open the message folder containing the e-mails you want to back up, then holding down the Ctrl key highlight them one at a time, or if you want to archive them all, highlight one and press Ctrl + A. Next, right-click on the highlighted messages and select Forward as Attachment, and a new message window will open with all of your selected messages attached.

Enter the name of your archive in the Subject line, then go to Save As on the File menu and choose a folder to save it in (making sure the file has the extension "*.eml").

You can read any message in the folder simply by clicking on your archive icon, which will then open a new message window in Outlook Express, and you can restore emails by dragging and dropping the attachments from the message window into the appropriate folders.

Another way to archive messages is to use a simple little utility called DBXtract. This program copies selected email folders from the OE message store into any folder of your choosing.

DBXtract may also be able to read messages from a corrupted store folder. It’s certainly worth trying if OE crashes and refuses to open messages.

The program is freeware and the zip file, which is only 68kb in size, can be downloaded from: http://www.oehelp.com/DBXtract/Default.aspx

Several readers have written in asking if there’s a way to delete attachments from emails, without losing the original message.

There’s no way to do this from within Outlook Express, but it can be done by other means.

Open the email with the attachment you want to delete, then go to Save As on the File menu and save it in a Windows folder or on the Desktop.

Next, open the email using Notepad (use Open on the File menu, don't double-click on the e-mail icon as it just opens an OE message window), or if it's too large for Notepad, use WordPad or your word processor.

The attachment will normally show up after the message text as a large block of characters. Simply highlight and delete the block, then Save the e-mail.

To get it back into Outlook Express, double-click on the modified message icon and it will open an OE window. Click the File menu, select Move To Folder and choose the message folder it came from. You can then delete the original message with the attachment.

Jargon filter

Attachment

A data file - usually containing a photograph or text document - sent with an e-mail message.

Logging

A record of the time and date of a set of actions or activities.

Registry

A large, constantly changing Windows System file containing details of how your PC is set up and configuration information for all programs stored on the hard disc.

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Top tips

The ceaseless tide of spam junk email is a real threat to the future of the internet, but there are plenty of programs that can help you deal with it.

My favourite is a freeware title called Mailwasher. It has an extremely useful facility that "bounces" unwanted messages back to the sender, marking your address as invalid in the hope that your details will be removed from the sender's mailing list. If we all did that, spam might stop overnight.

Mailwasher lets you preview the contents of your mailbox while it is still on the ISP's server. You can even read emails if you wish and then decide (or let the program choose) which ones to accept, bounce, delete or blacklist, before they're downloaded on to your PC.

You'll find it at http://www.mailwasher.net/ and, if you feel it's worthwhile, the author, who lives in New Zealand, will be grateful for a small tip.

Next week: Excel hints and tips