

# Managing your e-mails

How to configure Microsoft Outlook Express to avoid being swamped with e-mails



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E-mails need to be managed or they will take over your life. If you don't configure your system, all incoming e-mails simply end up in your inbox. That's fine if you have only a few e-mails a day, but if you receive more than that, you'll need to sort them properly. To do this you need to do two things:-

- set up a structured filing system for your e-mails
- sort incoming e-mails automatically to the correct destination

...and just to make things even easier for yourself, you can then use these principles to sort existing e-mails into the right destinations as well!

### Structure

The better organised your lists, the easier it will be to find what you want among the hundreds of e-mails dotted around your system. But beware! In creating any storage system it's easy to try to be too detailed and end up with an e-mail that could easily go into one of two or more folders. If you have a folder called 'Torex' and one called 'Computer', where do you put an e-mail from Torex about your computer? More importantly, when you come to retrieve an e-mail from Torex about your computer that was sent three months ago, will you remember to look in the right folder?

So the best way may well be to split up your e-mail filing system into a small number of broad groups, rather than having a large number of highly specific categories. But it's your decision. For continuing ease of use, just make sure that you have a method which is easy to understand, easy to keep to, and easy to remember six months from now.

In any case, exactly what headings you have for your e-mail system depend very much upon the sort of mail you receive (and where you pick it up, as well: home e-mails are likely to have quite different organisational needs from those in the surgery). At work you may well want to organise e-mails into headings such as Patients; Health Authority; PCG; TUG, Small

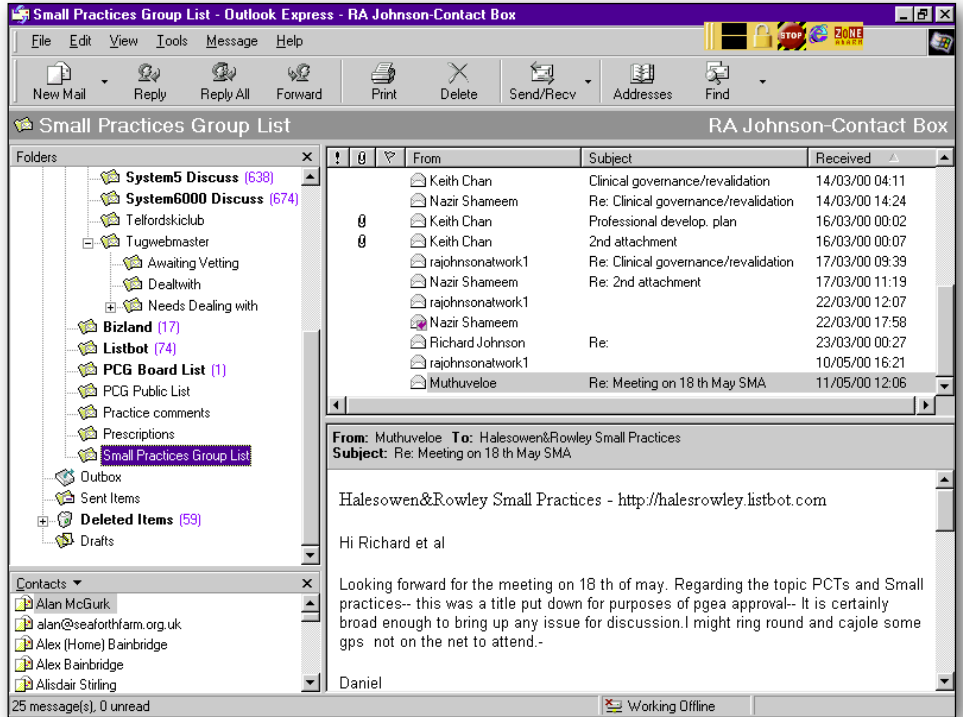


Fig. 1

Practices Association, RCGP, Hospital, Computer, Personal and so on. At home you might want to sort them into a completely different set of headings.

As a demonstration, the screenshot above (Fig. 1) shows a way of structuring mail coming off the TUG list-servers, and would be suitable for someone who subscribed to every area—General Discussion, System 6000, System 5, etc.. The illustration also shows an area set up for the Small Practices Association.

### Rules for sorting e-mails

Having laid out the structure of your filing system to your satisfaction, you can now create instructions ('Rules') to sort incoming e-mails automatically into the correct destinations.

From the Tools Menu select Message Rules/Mail. Something like Fig. 2 will appear. (If you have no existing Rules then the box will be blank. The box shown in the demonstration is already displaying some of my many existing rules).

To add a new rule, press the 'New' button and the dialog box (Fig. 3) appears.

The instructions are more or less self-evident, once you've realised that the first line in the 'Conditions' area really means 'Where the From line contains the names of the e-mail addresses of those people who are defined in the first 'contains people' section below' (and so on).

- Click on the appropriate boxes. (Experience has taught me that in

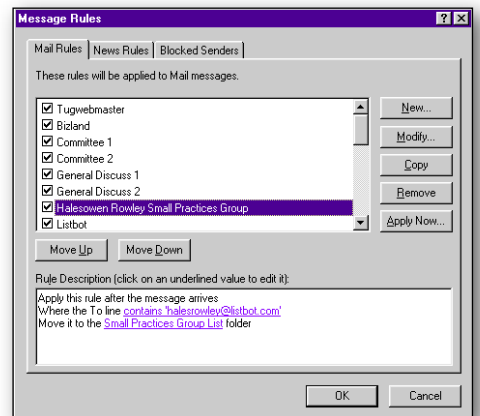


Fig. 2

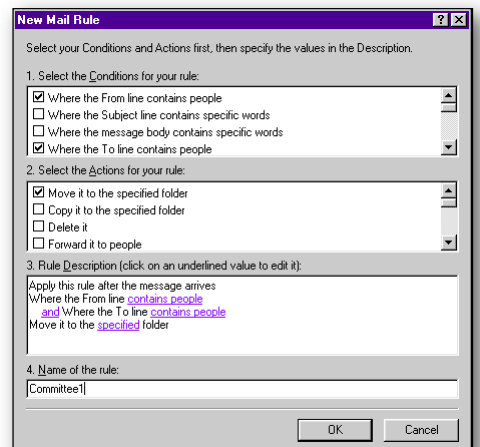
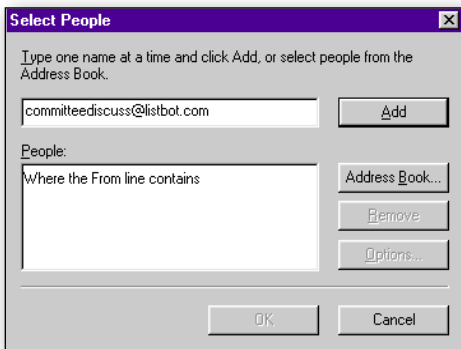


Fig. 3

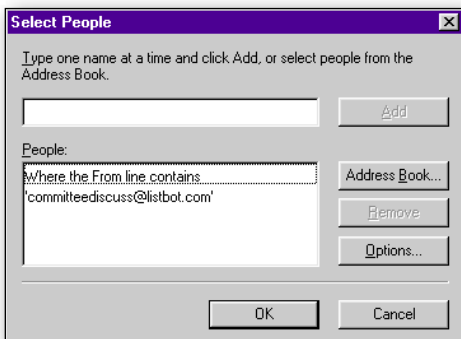
order to trap messages coming from the TUG listservers, you need to check both the boxes 'Where the From line contains people', and 'Where the To line contains people', so we'll be setting up the Rule to do both of these things.)

- Now check box 3 which says 'Move it to a specified folder'...
- ...and then check box 4. Give the rule an understandable name.

Now click on the first blue-highlighted 'contains people' in box 3 and the following dialog box will appear:-



Enter the address(es) that the e-mails will be from and press the 'Add' button. The box will now look like this.

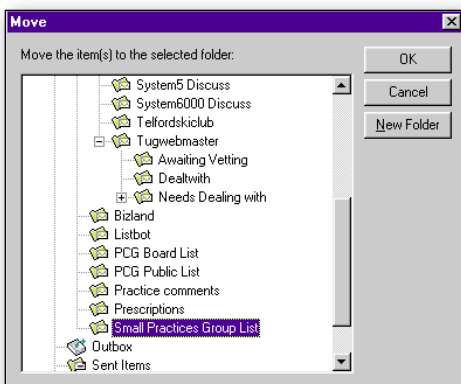


Press the 'OK' button. This process will need repeating with the second 'contains people' statement in box 3 ('Where the To line 'contains people'.

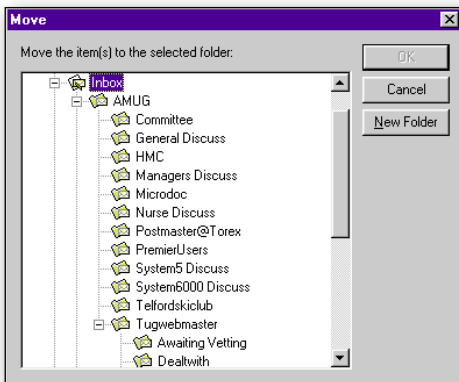
### Define the action to be taken

Now you have to tell the computer what to do with the e-mail it has identified as falling into this group.

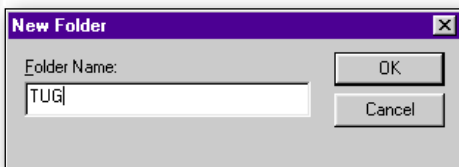
In the New Mail Rule (Fig.3, on the previous page), go down to the third box and click on 'Move to specified folder'. The 'Move' dialog box will appear.



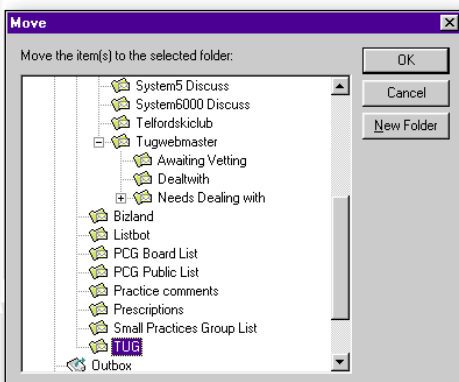
Scroll up to the top, highlight the 'Inbox'...



...and press the 'New Folder' button. The following dialog box will appear. Type in the name of the new folder and press OK

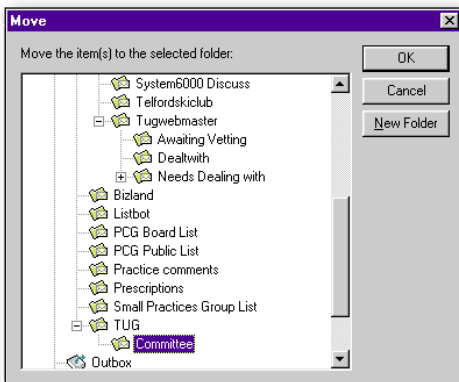


The new folder will now be visible in the tree structure.

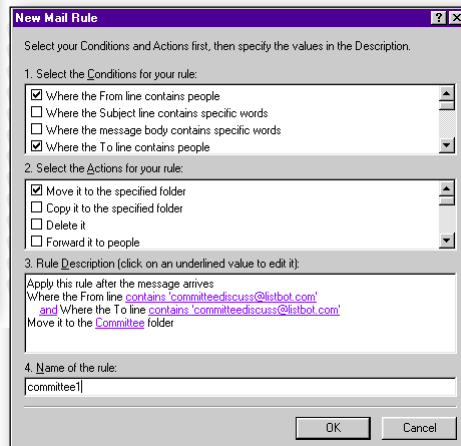


To make a sub-folder of the 'TUG' folder, highlight the 'TUG' folder. Now press the button marked 'New Folder' and a dialog box will appear, asking you to name the new sub-folder. Type in the name—let's simply call it 'Committee'—and click OK.

The new folder will now be visible in the tree structure.



Click OK to confirm that this is the intended destination to which e-mails conforming to this new Rule should be sent.

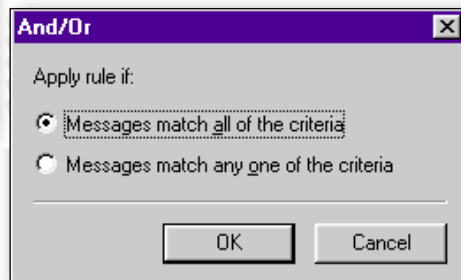


You will now find yourself back in the 'New Mail Rule' dialogue box but it has now changed to reflect the decisions you've made.

### Dealing with more than one condition

Now you have to deal with the third line of the third section of the dialogue box.

Because a message will never fulfil the criteria of being both from *committeediscuss@listbot.com* and *committeediscuss@listbot.com* at the same time, the rule needs to be an 'or' rule rather than an 'and' rule. To change this from the 'and' status it currently has, click on the 'and' in box 3, and another dialogue box will appear.



Select 'Messages match any one of these criteria' and click the OK button.

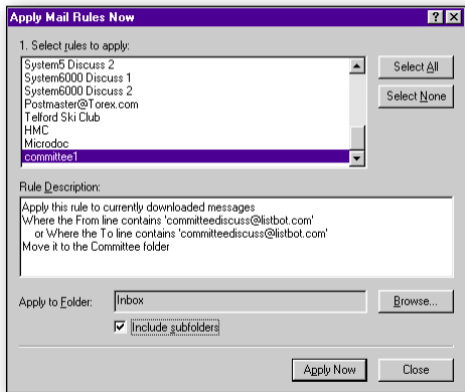
You will now be back in the New Mail Rule dialogue box which will have changed to reflect all your decisions. The rule is now complete. Select OK.

### So what have we achieved?

From now on, incoming mail from the committee discussion list will automatically be routed to the committee sub-folder.

### Dealing with existing messages

But what about existing messages? If you have an inbox full of unsorted messages you can choose to sort them out now if you want, by applying the Rule. Highlight the Rule that you've created and click the 'Apply Now' button.



This brings up the dialog box (see left).

Check the 'Includes subfolders' box and press the 'Apply Now' button.

The rule will now be applied to your messages and a progress bar will be displayed. When the progress bar has closed, click Close, and then OK.

Have a look and see if you are happy with the what actually happened (as opposed to what you thought you'd told the system to do!) If it's not gone quite as you intended you may wish to modify your rule further and check the results once more. To do this, use the 'Modify' button in Fig. 2.

As with programming, you're unlikely

to get it exactly right first time. E-mails will keep arriving which defy the selection procedure you *thought* you'd created—it always seems to happen! You can refine your rules until your e-mails are dealt with in exactly the way you want.

### Premiere—Tab key

Use the Tab key to cycle round the various fields that can be highlighted, such as Date, etc.