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Tip of the Month

If you receive many messages during the day, the **preview pane** in MS Outlook can be very helpful in quickly reviewing the contents of your messages. This area sits below the incoming messages box (if preview pane is selected).

One problem with the preview pane, however, is that many messages that are actually spyware have executable code built into the body of the message. If you show the text of messages when you download them, you may be opening your system to an unwanted attack. To screen your messages and delete any that are suspect before viewing the contents, **hide the preview pane:**

- Open Outlook and click **View** on the Main Menu.
- In Outlook 2002, scroll down and click on Preview Pane (to hide the preview area). In 2003, scroll down to Reading pane and over to Off.
- Only header information is now shown such as Sender, Date, & Subject – suspect emails can now be safely identified and deleted.
- If after you have downloaded your messages and all of them are legitimate, you can switch back to viewing the preview pane to review your messages.

You can use Outlook with the preview pane hidden if you choose. The main difference with this feature is that you will have to open each message (double click) to read the contents. Although it takes an extra step, this is a safer way to view email and highly recommended.

Getting the Most out of Outlook

Email is a fact of life! It is nearly essential for business communication and is very convenient in our personal lives as well. Unfortunately, the open and free arena of email has led advertisers to take a simple mode of communication and turn it into a smorgasbord of unwanted information. Receiving hundreds of unsolicited emails a day is common for many people, which saps people's energy and impacts productivity.

SPAM can be curtailed if not eliminated entirely, though. There are many third party software products that specifically target SPAM through filtering mechanisms or you can use the filtering capabilities of email clients like MS Outlook and Exchange.

MS Outlook 2003 is one of the best email programs for businesses and works equally well for individual users. There are some marked improvements over earlier versions that warrant an upgrade. (**Note:** MS Outlook is a robust software program; most home users will not need many features. The built-in email filtering feature though works as well for one individual as it will in a corporate environment and is highly recommended if SPAM is a problem.)

Features of Outlook 2003

Preview Pane – The new preview pane resembles a newspaper column – the directory tree is on the far left, your message threads are in the middle column, and the message text is now located in a column on the right side of the screen. This gives more room to read messages while still viewing the other messages in the folder.

Of course, if you find this setup frustrating (i.e., personal preference or you have a low screen resolution), you can switch back to the standard view with either the window pane off or with the window pane at the bottom of the screen.

To switch views in Outlook 2003:

- Click **View** on the Main Menu
- Scroll down to **Reading Pane** and over to Bottom or Off

If you like quick access to common tasks, show the **Advanced toolbar** which has buttons for viewing the Reading Pane, options for showing messages, viewing rules and alerts, and more. To show the Advanced Toolbar, click **View** on the Main Menu, scroll down to **Toolbars** and over to **Advanced**.

Message Threads – You can now follow replies and forwards much easier thanks to this message handling feature. You can view the threads as a block of text which will make finding what you are looking for quicker.

Quick Flags – If you can't respond to a message immediately, assign one of six brightly colored flags to it for follow-up at a later time. Important emails that need a quick response may get a red flag while newsletters could be assigned a blue flag for when you have some downtime.

Rules – By creating a custom rule, Outlook will automatically perform a certain function without your input. Setting up rules work great for junk email (filter certain keywords), subscription newsletters, or emails from certain individuals (filter by the sender's name). Highly customizable, rules will help you stay organized and keep your Inbox to manageable levels.

To create a rule in Outlook 2003 (& 2002):

- **Right click** the email message and click **Create Rule** or click the **Create Rules button** on the Standard Toolbar.
- A dialog box opens – In the top section, choose the **condition** (type in keywords next to subject if needed) and in the bottom section, choose an option for **what to do with the message**. Click **OK** when done.
- You can also click the **Advanced Options ...** button in the lower right corner and follow the dialog box instructions listed below.

These instructions are identical to how to create a rule in **Outlook 2002**.

- A dialog box opens (after right clicking the message on which you want to set up a rule) – Which condition(s) do you want to check?
- Scroll through the list and choose the appropriate condition – click **Next**.
- A new dialog box appears – What do you want to do with the message?
- Scroll through the list and choose the appropriate action – click **Next**.
- A new dialog box appears – Add any exceptions (if necessary).
- Scroll through the list and choose any exceptions – click **Next**.
- On the next dialog box, type a name for the Rule so that you can edit it quickly if needed.
- Make sure the 'Turn on this rule' box is checked. Click **Finish**.

Cached Exchange Mode

For users of MS Exchange Server, Outlook 2003 has a new feature that many network administrators are praising. **Cached Exchange Mode** allows client computers to keep a copy of their mailbox in an Offline Folder File (OST file). If a network goes down or experiences a temporary slowing, users will (in most cases) not notice the failure. Users will still be able to access the Address Book and will be able to craft emails. When the network regains functionality, any messages stored in the Outbox will be sent immediately. A major benefit of using the OST is that accidentally deleted emails can be recovered; they can't be recovered from a PST (Personal File Folder).

Users of **Exchange Server** also have advanced **junk email filtering** to block unsolicited email at the Internet Gateway.