## Using Email at Oxford - draft text for a website

If you're new to using email (or **electronic** **mail** to give it its full name), or you've used email elsewhere and aren't sure how things work at Oxford, then this guide will take you through the basic steps to get going.

If you'd prefer some information on email that's more geared to being printed out and read through, then take a look at our other introductory email guides. There's one version for beginners and another for more experienced users of email who already know the basics.

Now, as you've already got this far, we'll assume that you can handle a web-browser and that you know how to click on things to move around.

## Using this Guide

By now, you may have noticed that this guide is divided into sections as listed on the menu-bar at the left of this window. Although it's intended that you work through sections in order, you can use the menu-bar to skip forwards or go back if you get lost. You can also use the browsers scroll bars and the Previous/Next/Start buttons (below) to move around.

Some parts of the guide will open up a separate web window so that you can go and perform another task. When you've finished that task, you can close down the second window and come back to just seeing this one.

## Email Concepts

When someone sends an email, then as well as the message itself, they include the recipient's email address. The mail transmission system uses the address to route the message to the recipient's **mail server** - this is just a computer system equipped for storing and providing access to email. The mail server holds the message until the recipient connects to it to check for new mail.

To use email, you need **an account** on a mail server system. This provides:

* An email address so that your incoming messages end up in the right place
* A private mail storage area that will hold incoming messages until they get read
* Secure access to that area via a username and password
* Many servers also provide an area for you to file messages once they've been read.

The main central email server at Oxford is called **Nexus**. Nexus is one of the systems run by OUCS (Oxford University Computing Services).

## Registering for a Nexus account

Any current University member can register for a Nexus account. A few colleges and departments run their own mail servers, which they prefer their members to use. Your local IT staff will advise you about this.

All new members of the University are automatically pre-registered for a Nexus account for when they arrive in Oxford. If you're in this category, and you've got your username and password details from your college, you can move straight on to the section about email addresses.

If you're not new to Oxford, you'll need to go through a registration procedure:

* If you have a University card, you can register online now. Read the rest of this page first then - say "Allow" if you get a question about Security Certificates.
* When you've finished, close the Registration window to return here, then move on to the next section about email addresses. Remember that new accounts are not accessible immediately.

## Email Addresses

Most Oxford users have an email address relating to their college, e.g. chris.jones@chch.ox.ac.uk Graduate and staff users also get an email address relating to their department, e.g. chris.jones@anthro.ox.ac.uk.

(Other variants such as chris.jones@chch.oxford.ac.uk are **not** valid.)

Incoming mail to any of these addresses is delivered to the same account. Outgoing messages are always "stamped" with one particular version - normally the college address.

## Web Access to Nexus

Once your Nexus account is set up and available for use, you can try it out. Connecting via Nexus's web-based Outlook Web Access interface is simplest way to get started. All you need is Nexus's internet address which is **https://nexus.ox.ac.uk** - you can type this into your web-browser's address box just like any other web address.

You'll see entry boxes for your username and password. Try entering these (remembering to distinguish upper and lower case letters) then click on the **LogOn** button. All being well, you should get logged in to your Nexus account.

A full guide to Nexus's Outlook Web Access interface is available. The most important thing to remember about Outlook Web Access, or any email connection, is to **logout** when you've finished. Click on the **Logout** button, and then close the Nexus window.

One attraction of Outlook Web Access is that its available from any web-browser (e.g. in an internet cafe). Also, certain administrative operations on your email account can only be done via Outlook Web Access.

## Using an Email Client

Although Nexus's Outlook Web Access interface is very simple to use, it is really geared to "online" working where you have an active connection to the mail server. For some people, this may be inconvenient or expensive.

As an alternative, you can access Nexus using a more specialised email client program such as Outlook or Outlook Express. Such programs usually provide support for "offline" working so that you can review or reply to messages without currently being connected to the server. These programs also have facilities that aren't available in Nexus, like spell-checking, or the ability to access several email accounts at once and let you adopt different "personalities".

Setting up an email client program involves a bit of work in entering configuration information about your email server and account details.

## Email Protocols

Before configuring an email client program, you should be aware of two different modes of operation or **protocols** that can be used between an email client and an email server. These are:

* **IMAP** - incoming mail primarily resides on the server, although you can download messages for offline use.
* **POP** - incoming mail is automatically downloaded to your own computer, although a copy can be left on the server.

IMAP is most suited to people who want to access their email from several locations, e.g. at their office and from a PC at home. POP is more suited to someone who only ever needs to access their email from their own computer. POP can be attractive for dial-up users because it usually gives the shortest connection times. However, the automatic download of unexpected or unwanted large messages can sometimes give longer connection times.

The IMAP mode of operation is recommended for most users. Modern email clients provide both modes of operation. Nexus offers both modes, although some commercial internet services offer only POP.

## Popular Email Clients

Among the most popular email clients for Windows PCs and Macintoshes are:

* **Outlook** - distributed as part of Microsoft's Office package. The Outlook email client is very similar to Outlook Express.
* **Outlook Express** - distributed as part of Microsoft's Internet Explorer package.
* **Thunderbird** - This is a free email client available from the Mozilla project. It is easily configured and can import settings etc. from other major email clients.
* **Eudora** - a free program which displays advertising unless you pay a registration fee.

Many computers are now sold with Outlook Express pre-installed. However both Outlook and Outlook Express have been the subject of many virus and security attacks which has made many people reluctant to use them.

## Installing Email Clients

Microsoft Outlook Express is now commonly installed on new computers. If you have a copy, check that it's a reasonably current version - the version number is usually shown when you start up the program. Apart from additional features, newer versions also offer more protection against viruses and so on; however, they will require more disk-space and memory on your machine.

You can obtain or update a copy of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express via Microsoft's web site.

Microsoft Outlook, which is included in Microsoft Office, is available from the OUCS Online Shop (this excludes personal student purchases).

## Email Client Set-up

If you want to configure the Mozilla Thunderbird, Microsoft Outlook Express or Eudora email clients now, detailed step-by step instructions are available. (The Outlook Express instructions should also be applicable to Outlook.)

After you've installed and configured your email client, or if you want to try out the Outlook Web Access interface, a good practice exercise is to try sending an email message to yourself.