

## CHAPTER 3:

# Communication Resources

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*This chapter discusses the communication resources you can use through the Internet, including resources for national service programs. If you are already comfortable with e-mail, you may want to skip ahead to the section on listservs.*

## E-Mail

E-mail is simply a way of sending a text message that you type out on your screen from your computer to another person's computer via the Internet. When you send your message, the text file you have typed travels from your computer to a mail server operated by your Internet service provider (ISP). Intermediary computers use the address to direct the message through the Internet to the recipient's mail server. When the recipient checks her e-mail, she can open and read what you have written.

E-mail has many advantages over other methods of communication:

- **Speed:** E-mail is usually delivered anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes.
- **Cost:** Unlike a long-distance phone call, you can send an e-mail anywhere in the world at no charge beyond the monthly fee for your account.
- **Convenience:** E-mail can eliminate "phone tag" and can be downloaded to almost any computer connected to the Internet.
- **Multiple messages:** The same message can be sent to many people at one time.
- **File attachments:** Computer files or documents, such as a word processing file, can be "attached" to an e-mail and sent to anyone who has an e-mail address.

## E-mail Addresses

E-mail addresses have three distinct parts. Here's an example:

jdoe@cns.gov

All e-mail addresses contain the symbol @, which means "at" in e-mail jargon. The @ separates the other two parts of the address. The part to the right of @ in the example (cns.gov) is the domain name of the address. The domain name represents the recipient's ISP, company, or institution that provides the e-mail account. The part to the left of @ represents the name of the individual to whom you are sending the message (also called the "user name"). To make an analogy to traditional mail service, the domain is like the zip code, which directs mail to the correct post office. The user name is like the address or box number, which identifies the individual within that zip code.

## Sending E-Mail to the Corporation for National and Community Service

All Corporation employees have the ability to send and receive Internet e-mail. To send an e-mail message to a Corporation employee, type the person's first initial and up to seven letters of his or her last name (eight letters total with no spaces between), followed by the @ sign and the Corporation's domain name: cns.gov. For example, to send a message to Corporation employee John Doe, you would use the address shown here and above: jdoe@cns.gov.

## E-Mail Software

There are many different software programs available for sending and receiving e-mail. If you purchased your computer within the last few years, it is likely that you already have e-mail software on your computer integrated with your web browser (which are discussed in the next chapter). Some of the more common programs are Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express, Netscape Messenger, Eudora, Pegasus Mail, and Claris E-Mailer. Commercial online services like America Online provide their own e-mail software.

### ***Free E-Mail Accounts***

Since ISPs vary on the number of e-mail accounts they provide per dial-up account, you may wish to use one of the free e-mail services on the web.

Companies offering free web-based e-mail are:

#### **Hotmail**

[www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com)

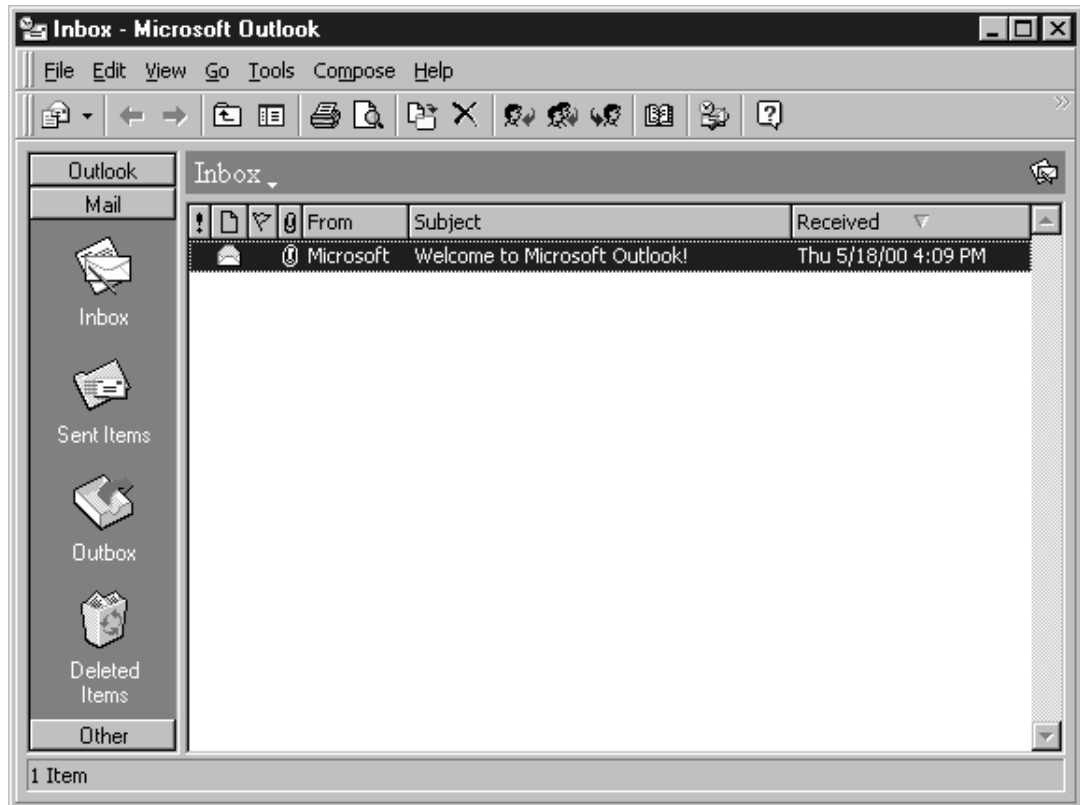
#### **Yahoo**

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

#### **Netscape**

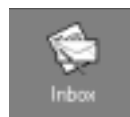
[www.netscape.com](http://www.netscape.com)

While features and appearance may differ among these programs, they all have the same basic functions. Below is an example of what an e-mail program looks like (in this case, Microsoft Outlook). Following is a description of the basic elements of most e-mail software programs, using the icons from Microsoft Outlook.

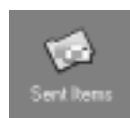


## Mailboxes

E-mail messages that you have sent and received are stored in different mailboxes. These are like the folders on your hard drive, but most e-mail programs call these folders mailboxes. To view the messages in a particular mailbox, click on the mailbox's icon. Messages can be moved from one mailbox to another.



**Inbox:** Incoming messages you have received are stored here. They appear in a list with one message per line. In any mailbox, double clicking on a message in the list will open up the full message in a new window.



**Sent Items:** Messages you have written and sent are stored in this mailbox.



**Outbox:** Messages you have written but have not yet sent are stored here. Some programs only have one mailbox for messages that have already been sent and ones that have not been sent.



**Trash or Deleted Items:** This is where you move messages that you no longer want to save. They are stored in the trash mailbox and can be retrieved until you use the command in your program that empties the trash.

## Function Buttons

Like most other software you use, e-mail programs also have a tool bar or task bar with buttons that control special functions or commands. Most programs have the basic functions explained below. To perform the command on a message, you must first click on the message to highlight it.



**New Message:** Opens up a new message window for writing an e-mail.



**Print:** Prints the highlighted message.



**Delete:** Sends the highlighted message to the trash mailbox.



**Reply:** Creates a new message addressed to the person who sent you the message. The original message will also appear in the body of the new message.



**Reply to All:** Sends your reply to everyone who received the message, instead of just the person who sent it (if the original message was sent to multiple e-mail addresses).



**Forward:** Sends the message on to someone new. A new message window opens with the text of the message you received, and you complete the address. You can also add your own message.



**Address Book:** Opens up your address book, where you may enter and save other people's e-mail addresses, just like you would add phone numbers in your traditional address book.

## *E-Mailing Offline*

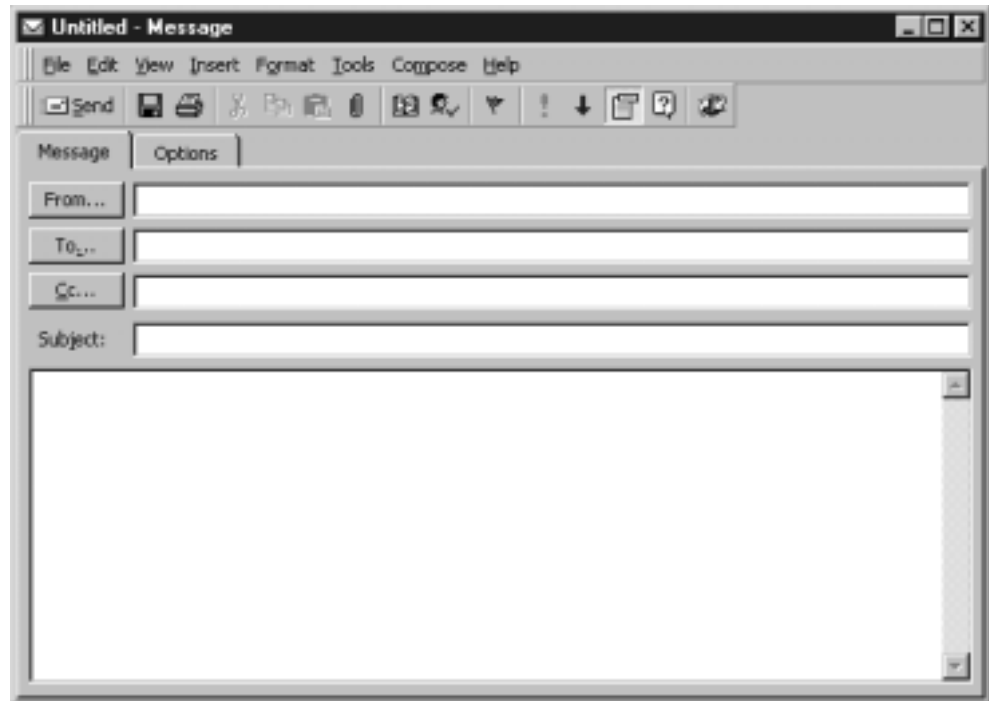
Many ISPs offer lower monthly rate accounts that provide a limited amount of time online. If you are not spending much time on the web, these can be a great value.

If you have one of these accounts, here are some tips:

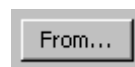
- Read and write your e-mail offline
- After downloading messages, disconnect from the Internet
- Respond to messages offline, queue them for delivery, and send at one time while online

## Sending an E-Mail Message

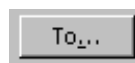
When you want to send an e-mail message to someone, click on the New Message button in the toolbar (described above), or select New Message from the File pull-down menu. This opens up a new window that looks something like the one below. Again, while location and appearance of these functions vary slightly in different programs, the basic functions are the same.



When you open the New Message window below the toolbar, you will see several empty boxes. Together, these boxes (called "fields") make up what is called the header of the message, as in a traditional memo. These fields should contain the following information:



**From:** Type your e-mail address here. You can set up your software so that this is entered automatically every time you start a new message.



**To:** Type in the address of the person to whom you are sending the message. If you click on the To button, it opens your address book and you can select any of the addresses, which are inserted automatically. You can send your message to more than one person simply by adding additional e-mail addresses in the field. They must be separated by a space, comma, or semicolon, depending on the software.



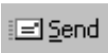
**CC:** As in a letter or memo, this stands for “carbon copy.” If you want someone else to get a copy of the message, you can add his or her address here. As in the To field, you can enter multiple addresses.



**Subject:** Enter a brief description (usually not more than several words) of the content or topic of your message.

In the large box below the header, you can type the content of your message. To maneuver among the fields, you can move the cursor into any of these fields and begin typing after clicking the mouse inside the box.

There are also several useful buttons in the toolbar of the New Message window that are common to most e-mail programs.



**Send:** When you have completed your message, you can use this button to send your message.



**Attach File:** Clicking on this button brings up a dialogue box that allows you to select one or more files from your hard drive to “attach” to your e-mail message. When you attach a file, a copy is sent with your message and saved to the hard drive of the recipient when they download your e-mail message. This very handy feature of e-mail allows you to exchange any kind of file, including word processing, spreadsheet, database, or graphic files, with anyone else who has an e-mail account.

While attaching files is very useful, it can also be frustrating. Because files must be encoded by your e-mail software to be transferred over the Internet, they must then be decoded by the recipient's software. Sometimes there are problems in the process and the recipient may not be able to open a file or it may appear as a bunch of characters that don't make any sense. Here are some tips to help avoid some of the common problems:

- Make sure the recipient of the file has the appropriate software to open the file. For example, if you are sending someone a file created in Microsoft Word, they need to have that software to open and read the file.

## ***E-Mail Attachment Viruses***

While you cannot get a virus from an e-mail message itself, attachments can contain viruses. Invest in virus protection software such as McAfee's Virus Scan (for PCs) and Virex (for Macs) or Norton Anti-Virus. They can be set to scan attachments for viruses when they are received.

Though many viruses are legitimate, there are a lot of hoaxes out there. These websites can help you determine whether or not a virus is a hoax:

**Dr. D. Bunk**  
<http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/filters/ehoax>

**Hoax Busters**  
<http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>

**Hoax Encyclopedia**  
<http://antivirus.about.com/compute/antivirus/library/blenhoax.htm>

**Virus Myths**  
<http://www.vmyths.com>

“Listservs? It’s like telling the office gossip something that you want everyone to know about. You just say it once and it gets automatically repeated to everyone.”

*Kate Snow*  
*AmeriCorps\*VISTA Supervisor*

- Most e-mail programs now use the MIME protocol for encoding files, but if the recipient is having trouble opening the file, you may be able to change the encoding protocol of your attachment to match that of the recipient’s e-mail software. This is usually done under a pull-down menu labeled Tools, Options, or Preferences.
- If the formatting of a word processing file is not important, save your document as “Text Only” and send the text document as the attachment. If the document is not too large, you can also use the Copy and Paste commands to put all the text right into the body of your message.
- If formatting is important, try saving the file in Rich Text Format (which will add “.rtf” to the filename) before sending it. This format translates the document to text without sacrificing all the embedded formatting. Microsoft Word and WordPerfect can read and open RTF files and generally do a good job of restoring the original text formatting.
- Data from databases and spreadsheets can be exported to different kinds of text files and then re-imported into other programs once they are received. Refer to your user’s manual for the appropriate file formats for exporting and importing data.

While the World Wide Web (or just “the web”) hasn’t been discussed yet, it is probably the greatest resource you have for learning how to use the Internet. For further information and a step-by-step demonstration of how to send e-mail and attach files, go to <http://www.learnthenet.com>, and click on Harness E-mail in the sidebar on the left side of the page.

## Listservs

Listservs, also known as mailing lists, use e-mail to distribute messages to a group of people called subscribers. Because listservs usually center around a particular topic of interest like fundraising, music, or environmental issues, there are listservs on almost any topic. To participate in a listserv, you must first subscribe, which means to join or sign on to a listserv. This step is usually automated and can be accomplished by sending an e-mail to an address with a specific command in the message. Before subscribing, you need to know the correct address of the listserv and the correct command for subscribing. The only other thing you need to have to participate

is an e-mail address. If you have subscribed correctly, you will receive a welcome message which you should read carefully and save. It contains important information about the rules and protocol of the listserv, how to unsubscribe, and who to contact for help if you need it.

To understand how a listserv operates, think of a telephone conference call. The difference is that e-mail is the mode of communication instead of the telephone. When one person sends a message to the e-mail address of the listserv, the message is sent out to all the subscribers. This is called "posting" a message. Other subscribers can respond by sending replies back to the listserv. The replies are distributed to all the subscribers as well.

The great thing about listservs is that they are a very inexpensive way to get information, ask questions, share ideas, and discuss issues with people in the same field with whom you might otherwise never have contact.

For more information about listservs, go to this website:

<http://www.squareonetech.com/maillist.html>

To search for listservs on specific topics, try these websites:

<http://groups.yahoo.com>

<http://topica.com>

## National Service Listservs

The following listservs have been created especially for the national service community. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to the address(es) listed below, and, if necessary, type the required command in the body of the message. Where appropriate, substitute your first and last name. Leave the subject line blank, or type "none."

**AClist** links people interested primarily in the AmeriCorps\*State/National network, including AmeriCorps members and program directors, state commissions, training and technical assistance providers, and CNS staff.

Address an e-mail to: [join-aclist@lists.etr.org](mailto:join-aclist@lists.etr.org)

Command: (no command necessary)

**COUNTSlist** is a forum for Corporation-funded programs and schools to discuss tutoring, math proficiency, and other issues relevant to operating national service and federal work-study math programs.

### ***Why should I subscribe to a national service listserv?***

Listservs give members of national service programs immediate access to Corporation messages, legislative updates, program specific bulletins, and more. They also help directors share resources, discover and discuss issues affecting national service, and get more involved in the expanding national service network.

Address an e-mail to: [join-COUNTSlist@lists.etr.org](mailto:join-COUNTSlist@lists.etr.org)  
Command: (no command necessary)

**READSlist** is a forum for Corporation-funded programs and schools to discuss tutoring, literacy, and other issues relevant to operating national service and federal work-study programs.

Address an e-mail to: [join-READSlist@lists.etr.org](mailto:join-READSlist@lists.etr.org)  
Command: (no command necessary)

**AmeriCorps\*VISTA On-Line** is a biweekly bulletin of service opportunities prepared by AmeriCorps recruiters.

Address an e-mail to: [listserv@american.edu](mailto:listserv@american.edu)  
Command: subscribe VISTA-L firstname lastname

**CNStech** is a forum for all national service programs to help each other solve computer-related problems or use technology more efficiently.

Address an e-mail to: [listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu)  
Command: subscribe CNStech firstname lastname

**The K-12 Service-Learning List**, operated by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, provides an opportunity for hundreds of teachers, administrators, students, researchers, and policy-makers, including Learn and Serve America grantees, to participate in valuable discussions and resource sharing.

Address an e-mail to: [join-k12-sl@lists.etr.org](mailto:join-k12-sl@lists.etr.org)  
Command: subscribe k12-sl firstname lastname

**NSSCTalk** is an informal discussion for National Senior Service Corps (NSSC) project directors, volunteers, and others interested in senior service.

Address an e-mail to: [join-nssctalk@lists.etr.org](mailto:join-nssctalk@lists.etr.org)  
Command: (no command necessary)

Besides the above Corporation-sponsored listservs, the following listservs also address issues related to national service programs:

**VISTAnet** listserv consists of AmeriCorps members, program directors, VISTA alumni, potential AmeriCorps applicants, and others interested in AmeriCorps. VISTAnet is run by VISTA alumni and is not formally connected to the Corporation for National Service.

Address an e-mail to: [listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu](mailto:listserv@maelstrom.stjohns.edu)  
Command: subscribe VISTAnet firstname lastname

**The Service-Learning List** is open to anyone with an interest in service-learning. Over 700 people discuss program issues, make requests for specific information regarding service-learning, and provide general announcements. The Service-Learning List is run by the University of Colorado and is not formally connected to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Address an e-mail to: [listproc@csf.colorado.edu](mailto:listproc@csf.colorado.edu)

Command: subscribe service-learning firstname lastname

**Service-Learning for Community-Based Organizations** listserv connects people who want to share resources and best practices related to developing service-learning programs. Sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation.

Address an e-mail to: [listserv@listserv.pointsoflight.org](mailto:listserv@listserv.pointsoflight.org)

Command: subscribe cbo-sl city state firstname lastname

## Newsgroups and Chat Rooms

Because of their amazing size and variety, newsgroups (also called Usenet or Usenet News) are hard to define. Newsgroups are basically like electronic bulletin boards. Users select a newsgroup based on a topic of interest, and read the messages posted to the group. If you want, you can respond to the messages you read. Unlike a listserv where messages are sent to your e-mail address, newsgroup messages sit on a server and the user connects to the server to read them.

The amount of useful information can be low in newsgroups, but they may still be worth exploring if you have the time. To read newsgroups, you use a reader that is built into your web browser. The newsreader operates similarly to the e-mail program. For more information on finding and participating in newsgroups, check out these websites:

<http://www.squareonetech.com/usenet.html>

<http://groups.google.com>

Chats or chat rooms allow you to “talk” live with people over the Internet. You are not really talking, of course, but rather typing on your keyboard and reading messages on your screen. You may need additional software or you may be able to access chats through your web browser or the software provided by your commercial online service provider.