



Systems and Network Analysis Center Information Assurance Directorate



Mail Client Security Cheat Sheet

SPECIFIC MAIL CLIENT ISSUES

The exorbitant amount of reliance users have on email poses a net danger to users. In this short form, we will cover only the most common mail tools.

Unfortunately, there are a number of different versions of Outlook and Outlook Express (OE) in use. Each version's security features vary by patch level, as well. Since Outlook shares some code with Internet Explorer, vulnerabilities are also sometimes shared. On the plus side, since Windows is the most frequently attacked operating system, its mail application, Outlook, has received the most attention for security enhancement. Mozilla and Thunderbird have some version differences, as well.

Since there are many variants of Outlook and Outlook Express, the steps will probably need to be modified for your specific version.

TURNING OFF PREVIEW PANE

Note: This is only needed in older Outlook and OE versions.

OUTLOOK

View -> Preview Pane

Disable Preview Pane for all folders

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

View -> Layout ->

Disable "Show Preview Pane"

OUTLOOK AUTOPREVIEW FEATURE

OUTLOOK

View -> Current View -> Messages with
AutoPreview

SENDING PLAIN TEXT EMAIL

OUTLOOK

Tools -> Options -> Email Format -> Mail
Format -> Plain Text

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Mail Sending Format -> Plain Text

MOZILLA

Edit -> Mail & Newsgroup Account Settings ->
Composition and Addressing

Disable "Compose messages in HTML format"

THUNDERBIRD

Edit -> Account Settings -> Composition and Addressing

Disable "Compose messages in HTML format"

BLOCKING DANGEROUS ATTACHMENTS

OUTLOOK

By default, current Outlook blocks many attachment types. Adding new types can be challenging since it involves editing the registry. Care should be taken in doing this!

Start -> Run -> regedit

Edit HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\
Office\11.0\Outlook\Security

New -> String Value -> Level1Add -> Modify

Add the new extensions as a semi-colon separated list, such as ".mdb;.url" which adds Microsoft Access files and Internet shortcuts to the blocking list.

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Security

Enable "Do not allow attachments to be saved or opened
that could potentially be a virus"

Note: To actually allow additional attachments may involve registry editing.

MOZILLA/THUNDERBIRD

There appears to be no way to block attachments in Mozilla or Thunderbird without the use of an ancillary anti-virus program.



Systems and Network Analysis Center Information Assurance Directorate



TURNING OFF JAVASCRIPT IN EMAIL

OUTLOOK

Tools -> Options -> Security -> Secure Content ->
Restricted Sites -> Zone Settings -> Custom Level
Disable "Active Scripting"

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Security
Enable "Restricted sites zone (More secure)"

Start -> Settings -> Control Panel ->

Internet Options -> Security -> Custom Level
Disable "Active Scripting"

This also disables Visual Basic scripts.

MOZILLA

Edit -> Preferences -> Advanced ->
Scripts and Plugins -> Mail & Newsgroups
Disable "Enable Javascript for"

THUNDERBIRD

Edit -> Preferences -> Advanced
Disable "Enable JavaScript in mail messages"

USING SECURE IMAP to READ EMAIL

OUTLOOK

Tools -> Email Accounts -> Internet Accounts ->
mail server -> Properties -> Advanced
Set incoming mail to "This server requires a secure
connection (SSL)"

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Accounts -> Mail -> *mail server* ->
Properties -> Servers
Enable "My server requires authentication"

MOZILLA

Edit -> Mail & Newsgroup Account Settings ->
Server Settings

THUNDERBIRD

Edit -> Account Settings -> Server Settings
Enable "Use Secure Connection (SSL)"

NOTE: The server port should automatically change to port 993. A certificate compatible with the server certificate should be loaded in the mail client.

BLOCKING REMOTE IMAGE LOADING

OUTLOOK

Tools -> Options -> Security -> Change Automatic
Download Settings
Enable "Don't download pictures or other content
automatically in HTML email"
(Only available since Outlook 2003 for Windows)

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Security
Enable "Block images and other external content in
HTML e-mail"
Note: Only available since OE supplied with Windows XP
SP2.

MOZILLA

Edit -> Preferences -> Advanced -> Privacy and Security ->
Images

Enable "Do not load any images"

THUNDERBIRD

Edit -> Preferences -> Advanced
Enable "Block loading of remote images in mail messages"
Disable "Allow remote images if the sender is in my
Address Book"

READING HTML EMAIL AS PLAIN TEXT

OUTLOOK

Tools -> Options -> Preferences -> Email Options ->
Read all standard mail in plain text

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Read -> Read all messages in plain text

MOZILLA

View -> Message Body As -> Plain Text

THUNDERBIRD

View -> Message Body As -> Plain Text Tools -> Junk Mail
Controls -> Settings
Enable "When displaying HTML messages marked as junk,
sanitize the HTML"

BLOCKING OUTGOING APPLICATION MAIL

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Tools -> Options -> Security
Enable "Warn me when other applications try to send mail
as me"