Outlook 2000 And 2002 Tips And Tricks

We present a collection of useful tips to help ensure that your users are getting the best from Outlook 2000 and XP.

By Dennis Jarrett
Technical Writer

Outlook 2000 is often at the heart of a company's IT system, as far as users are concerned. These tips and tricks will help you and your users ensure that Outlook is running most efficiently.

Strip Attachments

Outlook .PST files are famously large, and file attachments don't help - if you want to retain the email containing the attachment, you get the attachment too. Unless you have Todi. This is an Outlook 2000 add-in that strips the attachments from messages and saves them separately in a designated location. A pointer is inserted into the message so you don't forget where Todi put the attached file. Simple, neat, and available from **www.aufgang.org/koch/homepage/software.asp**.

Net Folders

The Net Folders facility first appeared with Outlook 98, basically to enable users without Exchange Server to share Outlook folders with anyone they can send email to. It's particularly useful for sharing a common Contacts folder, for instance, or allowing team members to check your Calendar.

When you share a folder by using Net Folders, a copy of the shared folder appears in the Outlook Folder List of everyone who is identified as subscribing to the folder (the owner of the Net Folder determines a permission level for each subscriber which defines whether or how they can amend the folder's contents).

Subscribers who do not use Outlook can't receive non-email folders, and they will receive the shared items as standard Inbox messages, but they can at least participate in the system.

Outlook 2002 (XP) has lost the Net Folders function, so if you need to synchronise or share any of your Outlook folders among multiple machines or different users, and you don't want to install Exchange Server, you should stick with Outlook 2000.

On the other hand, Net Folders has never been entirely reliable. Even in the much-improved Outlook 2000 implementation, it's not uncommon to hear about problems - data that doesn't replicate, shares that simply stop working and so on. A better solution is probably a third-party offering such as Netpab (**www.net-pab.de**) - this enables you to share a Windows addressbook (a .pab file) and anything in a .pst file (especially Contacts, Calendar and Inbox). For now it's a Windows 9x program only, but a NT/2000 version is about to be made available.

Outlook 2002 Security

Outlook 2002, released at the end of May 2001 as part of Office XP, has some significant deficiencies by comparison with Outlook 2000 - most of them quite deliberate decisions that aim to improve the email client's security. The result, though, is a series of blanket prohibitions that may seem inflexible in circumstances where virus spread and unauthorised accesses are being controlled in other ways.

In particular, you won't be able to launch attachments directly from the email client. Nor will you be able to use Outlook to save them to your system. And if you try to forward a message containing a .EXE file, Outlook will omit the attachment from the forwarded message.

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You might prefer some flexibility in this matter. The Outlook experts at Slipstick.com have identified a registry tweak which will restore runability to specified file extensions - find HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Office\10.0\Outlook\Security and add a new string value named Level1Remove. For the value, enter a list of file extensions separated by semicolons. For example, entering doc;url will unblock Word files and Internet shortcuts. A more elegant (and less risky) solution is a free add-in from one Ken Slovak, downloadable from **www.slipstick.com/files/attopt.zip**. This adds an Attachment Security Options page to the Tools/Options commands in Outlook 2002.

Either solution effectively restores the procedures provided with Outlook 2000 SR-1 - in other words, you'll have to save the attached file before it can be opened.

Password Recovery

Losing a PST password can be disastrous, especially if you have no backup. Outlook Password Recovery Key is a shareware utility (register for $45) that can instantly find passwords for Outlook and Exchange Client .PST files and Forms .OFT files. It's easy to use - just drag and drop the file to the program window - and it can handle passwords for .PST files up to 2GB in size. Download from **www.lostpassword.com/outlook.htm**. There's also a free demo that will recover passwords of not more than two characters in length, so you can check that it works on your installations.

WorkGroup PostOffice

Microsoft Mail and the WGPO were probably omitted from Outlook 2002 because of their Y2K non-compliance, but in general Microsoft hasn't been overenthusiastic in its support of the workgroup postoffice recently.

The workgroup postoffice is primarily used for internal email on an office network, and if you set up Outlook 98/2000 for Corporate or Workgroup mode you can also use it for some limited sharing via Net Folders. It was included in Windows 95, 98 and NT; you can also implement it under Windows 2000 by copying the WGPOADMN.DLL and WGPOCPL.CPL files from an NT 4.0 installation (or expand WGPOADMN.DL_ and WGPOCPL.CP_ from the NT Server CD-ROM). It isn't in Windows Me, but again it should run if you can copy WGPOADMN.DLL and WGPOCPL.CPL from a Windows 98 installation.

WGPO isn't an elegant solution, and the last major revision was in November 1993. But it's clear that many workgroups, especially smaller teams, continue to use "windows messaging" as a service in Outlook. Microsoft does warn WGPO users that they will lose this functionality if they upgrade to Outlook 2002. The solution is to stick with Outlook 2000, or move over to one of the many third-party POP/SMTP mail servers - some of which are free, all of which can do the job. There's a good summary at **www.slipstick.com/addins/services/groupinternet.htm**.

Quick Journal Entry

To quickly open a Journal entry window for a contact, drag the contact name to the Journal icon in the Outlook bar. The Journal entry will open with the contact's name already inserted. Now you can add notes, or time a phone call. This entry will automatically be placed in the Journal.

"To quickly open a Journal entry window for a contact, drag the contact name to the Journal icon in the Outlook bar."

Care With Bcc

You won't necessarily conceal the email addressees of copy-to recipients by adding them to the bcc: field. Outlook is just one of several email clients that include bcc: addressees in the public addressee list when you use the Reply To All feature.

Send Reminder Flags

It's easy enough to apply reminder flags to incoming messages - just click the red Flag icon, select a reminder label, and set an (optional) reminder date. But it's equally easy to add flags to outgoing messages in the same way - the recipient will see the reminder at the top of the message header when it is opened. This only works if the recipient uses Outlook, of course.

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Mail Subjects

Email doesn't always carry the most useful subject heading, and sometimes you do want to sort incoming mail by subject or quickly locate a saved message. But subject headers aren't sacrosanct, even on received mail - just open the message, highlight the subject text, and replace it with a new heading. Save the message. You can change the name when you save a read message, too.

Calendars For The Web

It's easy to publish an Outlook calendar on the Web. Click File/New/Folder to create a folder containing Calendar items. Assemble and format the calendar, then use File/Save as Web Page. You can specify start and end dates, title and a background graphic as well as its file name. The calendar will be saved as an HTML file, which you can then copy to a Web site along with its folder - a quick and easy way of publishing anything from meeting room bookings to PTA events.

The resulting file is editable as normal with any Web editor, though some of the HTML is intimidatingly complex. You can at least remove the self-serving "Created by…" and Outlook graphic on bottom right, and the folder will contain a cal.css style sheet which you can play with.

Merge Quirks

If you use the Microsoft Word Mail Merge Wizard and intend to specify your Outlook Contacts list as a data source, be warned - Word can't utilise the Categories field. That makes it impossible to filter your Contacts list to pluck out only people who are on your newsletter or social-invitation category. The workaround is to use Outlook to start the merge - filter out the recipients, then use the Outlook Mail Merge Wizard (Tools/Mail Merge).

Another reason for using Outlook is that you can reduce the otherwise unwieldy number of fields in the Insert Merge Field list that you use to build the Word document. Display your contacts as a phone list (View/Current View/Phone List) and then remove all the columns you don't need for your document. Now do your filtering, or manually highlight the recipient addresses, and go to Tools/Mail Merge. In the Mail Merge Contacts window, select Contact fields in current view.

Fill in the rest of the details, press OK, and the Word document will open. When you select Insert Merge Field now, you'll see a useably short list of fields starting with those from your Phone List view.

Archiving

If you don't archive older items, your OUTLOOK.PST file will get unfeasibly large - with the result that Outlook will get slower and slower, possibly crashing or hanging for no obvious reason. Outlook has a handful of tools that make it relatively easy to archive old data manually. Go to File/Archive and you'll be stepped through the options. Outlook will then weed out items that are older than the cut-off date and move them from OUTLOOK.PST to ARCHIVE.PST.

Manual archiving requires discipline, of course, which is why Outlook also includes an AutoArchive option. You set the general operation in Tools/Options/Other/AutoArchive, and you can also right-click on individual folders to specify more detailed cut-off periods.

The major drawback is the ARCHIVE.PST file is cumulative; each archive operation adds to the existing file, with the result that it will inevitably become huge (and Outlook simply won't be able to open a file a few gigabytes in size, which rather removes the point in having an Outlook-compatible archive file format). This is a case for a disciplined approach; rename ARCHIVE.PST at regular intervals (perhaps as ARCHIVE1.PST, ARCHIVE2.PST and so on) to ensure that the current archive never gets too large.

Pick-me-up

If Outlook starts behaving badly, with sluggish performance and unexplained freezing, your first option is to compact the .PST file. Right-click on the Personal

Internet Mail Only Services

Outlook 98 and Outlook 2000 distinguish between Internet Mail Only (direct connection to the Internet) and Corporate/-Workgroup mode (connection via a local network and a server). The IMO option includes a number of features that are not carried into the spec for the single-mode Outlook 2002.

- Automatic save option for addresses of people you reply to (you should be able to write a VBA workaround or use a third-party tool like Ex-Life) extends Outlook Rules to include actions on sending messages or creating them in a folder as well as receiving messages - details at **www.ornic.com/add-ins/exlife.shtml**.
- Export mail account settings to a .iaf file.
- No support for Microsoft Fax or Symantec WinFax Starter Edition.
- Sharing the WAB address-book between Outlook and Outlook Express.
- Using the Nickname field for address resolution - you can still give a contact a Nickname, but Outlook 2002 won't use it in a "check names" exercise.

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Folders entry in the Folder List. Select Properties/Advanced, then click the Compact Now button. This should provide a measure of short-term relief, but if problems persist you should create a brand new OUTLOOK.PST file and use your existing one as a backup (you'll be able to copy over the information you need like your most recent emails, your calendar, and the address book).

Close Outlook if it's running, then use Windows Find to locate OUTLOOK.PST. (You may have more than one of them, in which case it makes sense to apply this procedure to all of them and turn them all into backups.) Right-click on OUT-LOOK.PST, click Rename, and give the file a new name while retaining the extension - say BACKUP01.PST. Start Outlook. It will complain about the absence of OUT-LOOK.PST, but you can just keep selecting defaults by clicking OK or Open. Eventually Outlook will open with empty folders.

Make sure the Folder List view is selected (View/Folder List). Take a look at your folders list. You'll be adding a new folder, and you'll want to be able to identify it when it appears.

Now use File/Open/Personal Folders File and navigate to the old OUTLOOK.PST file that you renamed BACKUP01. Open it. This file will appear in the Folders List as Outlook Today - a second Outlook Today, because also appearing on the Folder List will be a new Outlook Today folder created as part of the virginal new OUTLOOK.PST.

Right-click the old Outlook Today. Select Properties/Advanced and give this folder a new name - such as BACKUP01 in this example. Click OK twice to return to the main Outlook screen. You can now take a look at the BACKUP01 folder; it should contain folders for all your original material. Open the old folder, select any items to be included in your new OUTLOOK.PST, and drag them on to the corresponding folder name under Outlook Today in the Folder List.

If you want everything from the original - all your Contacts, for example - don't simply try to drag a whole folder into Outlook Today; open up the original folder and use Ctrl-A to select everything, then drag them on to the new folder.

To copy Calendar items you first have to be in Active Appointments mode (View|Current View|Active Appointments) before you can use Ctrl-A and drag them to the new Outlook Folders Calendar.

Damaged PST Files

For more serious issues you should try the Inbox Repair Tool. This can fix many problems with damaged .PST files - if it's not there on the Start menu, under Programs/Accessories/System Tools, look through your disk for a program called SCANPST.EXE and run it manually.

If SCANPST finds a problem it will ask whether you want a backup copy of the original (you should always answer Yes) before it attempts to correct the errors. If that hasn't worked, repeat the SCANPST run a few times - and try preceding it with SCANDISK (that too should be found under Start/Programs/Accessories/System Tools). SCANPST will also work on the .OST files used for offline access to Exchange Server folders. It won't sort out problems with a corrupted Personal Address Book (.pab) file, though.

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