

Email Basics

By Len Nasman Copyright 2008 (may be copied with permission*)

Introduction

Email is a method of composing, sending, storing, and receiving messages over electronic communication systems.

It provides a way to keep in touch with anyone who has an email account on the Internet. Since it is easier to type a few lines and click on the send button than it is to write a formal letter, many folks find that they are now communicating more often with friends and relatives. Also, since it is just about as fast to send email to someone half way around the world as it is to send a note across town, people are now communicating internationally more than ever.



Email Addresses

To send and receive email, you first have to know the **email address** of the person you want to send email to. You also have to have an email address of your own. A typical email address will look like the following: **schoolmaster@bvres.org**

The first part of the email address is the **user name**, in the above example **schoolmaster**. The characters after the user name, in this case **@bvres**, are the **domain name** of the **web mail host**. The last three characters in the address, the **name extension**, give a hint as to the type of web mail host. The extension **org** usually (but not always) indicates a non-profit organization; **com** usually indicates a commercial organization and **net** usually indicates an organization set up primarily for email.

When you obtain an email address from a web mail host, you will be provided with a **password**. Whenever you want to access your email account, either for sending or receiving messages, you will

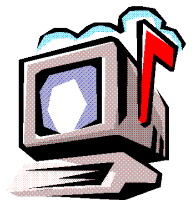
have to enter your **user name** and **password**. This minimizes the chance that someone else will use your account or read your mail.

NOTE: There are many different passwords used with computers. In some cases, you have to enter a password to get the computer to start operating. You may use particular web sites, like bank account web sites, that require a password to enter. Keep in mind that your email password is different from the other possible passwords used with your computer.

Internet Connections

Sending and receiving email requires that you have access to a computer that is connected to the Internet. Computers are connected to the Internet through an **Internet Service Provider**, or **ISP**. A thing to keep in mind is that the web mail host and the ISP are two different things. A point of confusion is that many ISP's also provide a web mail host service. For example, earthlink will, for a fee, act as an ISP. Earthlink also provides as part of their typical service contract a web mail host option. To add to the confusion, earthlink also provides an email software option. (More about email software a little later.)

People can send and receive email without paying for an ISP as long as they have a **web mail host**. There are a number of free web mail hosts available such as Yahoo mail and Hot mail. At Bristol Village, as of January 2008, residents can set up an email account by joining the **Bristol Village Computer Club**. Membership entitles you to a web mail host service. Email addresses through this web mail host may have the form lastname.n@bvres.org.



Internet Connections

Once you have an email address, you can send and receive email through any computer connected to the Internet. The Bristol Village Computer Club maintains a number of public computers that can be used for email. Many public libraries throughout the USA have computers available for public use. As you travel around, you can find free or low cost computer Internet access at many hotels, motels, and government operated visitor centers. For example, I once used a computer at a visitor center in Shelburn, Nova Scotia, to access my email.

Computers can be connected to the Internet either through wires, like phone lines or TV cables, or through wireless access points. Most new laptop computers include wireless capability. These make it possible to send and receive email through free wireless access points maintained by some retail stores like Panera Bread. The point is that once you have an email address, there are many different ways to send and receive email.

The thing to remember is that to send and receive email you must have three things:

1. An email address supplied by a **web mail host**.

2. A computer connected to the Internet through an Internet Service Provider (**ISP**).

3. A computer program, **email software**, that enables you to compose, send, and read email messages.

Many people sign a contract with an **ISP** that also provides a **web mail host** service, and may also provide **email software** for composing and sending email messages. Some people use email software, such as Microsoft Outlook Express, that come with the Windows operating system installed on their computer.

On the other hand, it is possible to have a web mail host separate from an ISP, and to use email software that is not supplied either by an ISP or the operating system in use.

NOTE: If you would like help with email from a BVCC member, you need to know the three things listed above for your situation. If you have not yet obtained an ISP or web mail host, you can try out email in the BVCC Computer Room.

The BVCC web mail host

The Bristol Village Computer Club provides a web mail host service for members. A bvres.org email address can be used with *any* ISP and with *any* email software. This means that if you change your ISP, you do not have to change your email address.

Note for folks who already have a web mail host and email address. It is possible to maintain any existing email address you might have and to have any email addressed to a bvres.org email automatically forwarded to your existing email address.

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