

Crabby's top 10 e-mail crabs

Taken from Microsoft's: Crabby Office Lady

Crab #1: Discretion is the greater part of replying

Imagine that you've received a piece of company-wide e-mail from someone in your very large organization. If you feel the need to respond to the sender, rest assured that every member of your very large organization does not want to have to read your reply, no matter how witty or urbane you may think it is. This goes the same for personal e-mail (especially if it's an Internet joke or rumor).

For example, I'm fairly certain that Bill Gates doesn't need to know if I'll be attending the annual Microsoft picnic with one child or twelve. Not that he doesn't care, mind you; he just has other types of e-mail that may be more pressing. Shocking, but true. So please, don't hit that **Reply to All** button.

Crab #2: Stop yelling at me

USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS IS NOT ONLY RUDE AND IRRITATING, IT'S ALSO HARD TO READ. Save your caps for special occasions, such as those times when you want your recipient to know you're shouting. GOT IT?

Gentle reader, if you use all caps and prefer that your senders use all caps too because you have limited eyesight, note that you can adjust various settings for your entire computer to help with that. See Help in Windows® for more information.

Crab #3: Save the stationery for snail mail

(For all of you who love to use background color and stationery for your **personal** e-mail, please disregard this crab. This one is for you people at the office.)

I know it's important to you that everyone knows you're creative, arty, and colorful. Your cubicle fairly screams kitsch; how could we not know? But we're at work here, and I don't want to have to hippity-hop through your "bunnies 'n love" stationery just to figure out what your message is.

Crab #4: This is not a chain letter

If I send you a nice note and then get a response from you that, at first glance, appears to have only what I wrote to you at the top of it, I'm going to assume you have nothing to say to me (and sent me an empty e-mail message to tell me as much).

Let's put this another way: when you're replying to an e-mail message and you want to include what the sender wrote, add your comments at the **top** of the mail, not the bottom. I know what I wrote — why would I want to reread it?

That being said, I do see the logic in keeping all the notes and replies in order (my original message on top, followed by your reply, followed by my reply to your reply, and so on). Well, it may be like that in the snail mail world, but we're not in Kansas anymore, Toto. Adapt. Your reply on top, please — this isn't a chain letter. (And if it is, don't send it to me. But that's a crab of a different color.)

Crab #5: Too many forwards is one step backward

Speaking of chain letters, if you're like me (and I know you are), you are fed up with receiving the same jokes, Internet rumors, and chain letters promising free cases of champagne, \$1000 from Bill Gates, and miracle cream that erases all your fine lines and bad memories.

While you can cut some slack for those in your life who have just discovered that **Great Oracle of Misinformation** we call the Internet, it's just not appropriate, considerate, professional, or even cool to forward these useless things to coworkers. (And by the way: Mikey, the kid from a 1970s-era cereal commercial, did not explode after drinking a popular cola laced with fizzy candy. I don't know where he is, but he's probably going through a midlife crisis right about now.)

Crab #6: Don't be a cyber-coward

If you've got something to say to me that is:

- Highly personal
- Scary
- Sad
- Angry
- Tragic
- Vicious
- Shocking
- Any combination of the above...

...please do it in person. (Actually, I prefer you don't do it at all.) Sentient beings are filled with emotions (and NOT emoticons). E-mail programs aren't the best translators of this.

Crab #7: I love you but not your 500 KB image file

As I see it, there are three main reason why you should refrain from sending really large files via e-mail:

1. **It takes a long time to download a large file.**
This is particularly true if you are on a dial-up connection. When your recipient is checking e-mail because she's waiting for an important message from the President of the United States (POTUS), it's just plain rude to make her sit there for 10 minutes to download the photo of your dog's birthday party.
2. **E-mail servers are like studio apartments: there's only so much space to keep everything.**
If your huge file is taking up 3 megabytes (MB) of space on your recipient's 4 MB e-mail server, he might ask you to move out, take your stuff, and never come back.
3. **Sometimes you're at the mercy of the ISP**
Some Internet service providers (ISPs) or free e-mail providers limit the size of a single piece of mail coming through their servers. Sometimes this is because of security issues, and sometimes these companies just want to annoy you. Whatever the reason, your recipient may never even know you sent him something.

So please consider the size the file you're sending. If it's a large image, make it smaller. If it's large document, zip it up using a file compression program.

Crab #8: The subject "Re: " means nothing to me

In other words, fill out the **Subject** line. I get hundreds of e-mail messages each day, and when I get one without anything in the **Subject** line, I tend to skip over it. If the subject of the message wasn't important enough for the sender to fill out the **Subject** line, then it's not important to me. Be gone!

Crab #9: Plain text and HTML are not buddies

If someone sends you mail in plain text format, you can usually tell because: 1) it has no formatting, and 2) the font it appears in is **Courier**. If you decide to reply to a plain-text sender using HTML format with special fonts and formatting, the text that your recipient receives will look like indecipherable nonsense that needs a Cold War code breaker to untangle its message. Do your recipients a favor: send your reply in the format it came in.

More about message formats:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HP052801441033.aspx>

Crab #10: Itchy trigger finger? Count to 10 before hitting the Send button

You're hot under the collar and everybody knows that (and sometimes loves that) about you. But before sending your clever and scathing message out there to the world (with virtually no chance of retrieving it), remember this: the pushing of the **Send** button lasts a moment; its effects can last a lifetime — or at least until you're back on the streets, looking for another job.

E-Mail Terms

Taken from Microsoft's: Crabby Office Lady

E-mail client

The software program on your computer that enables you to send, receive, and work with your e-mail. Examples of e-mail clients are Outlook, Microsoft Outlook Express, and Eudora.

MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) and S/MIME (add Secure to MIME)

MIME extends the basic, text-oriented Internet mail system. It provides a way to format messages so that they can be sent over the Internet to people using all kinds of e-mail clients, protocols, and text editors. S/MIME supports encrypted (secret-coded) messages — that's what Outlook uses when it's used in conjunction with Microsoft Exchange Server.

Flame mail

An e-mail message that is mean, hot-tempered, curt, or not-so-polite. It raises your hackles and gets under your skin. And unfortunately, it's contagious. Flame mail is in abundance on electronic bulletin boards, online discussions, and so on.

Domain name

The part of an e-mail address that comes after the @ sign. My e-mail address is crabby@microsoft.com, so my domain name is **microsoft.com**. Yours may be **hotmail.com**, **aol.com**, or **(your own obscure name).com**. Your domain name identifies one or more Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, which are assigned numbers that identify computers on the network. Each domain name has a top-level domain it belongs to, such as .gov (government), .org (nonprofit organization), .mil (the military), and now .tv (my guess is as good as yours).

Spam

Spam is unsolicited commercial e-mail. No one is completely safe from spam, but it sure is a hotbed of conversation. I'm hoping for some serious anti-spam legislation to pass one of these days. A girl can dream.

Protocols: beasts of another type

To send e-mail to and from different kinds of e-mail servers, we need an agreed-upon format for sending and receiving the data. This format is called the protocol, and there are a few types. You may recognize these as options you choose from when setting up Outlook or Outlook Express:

IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol)

IMAP is a way to access a server and, if you like, keep your e-mail messages stored on the server. Using IMAP has its advantages:

- You can view just the headers of your e-mail messages and decide whether you want to download them. No need to download an entire spam message when the heading is disgusting enough.
- You can create and move folders or mailboxes, delete messages, and even perform a search for certain parts of a message — all on the server.
- Your e-mail travels with you and is always available since it's not stored locally on any particular client (and I know you know what an e-mail client is).

Note: You do have to be connected to the server continually while you're receiving or sending your e-mail, so that's one thing to consider.

POP3 (Post Office Protocol 3)

When you use POP3, your e-mail is stored on the server initially. But once you read it (or at least go and get it), it's downloaded to your client and is no longer stored on the server. As you may have guessed, there is a regular POP2, which became a standard in the olden days (the mid-1980s). Now most servers use POP3, so if you're still in POP2 land (or, heaven forbid, POP1), get with it, Grandpa.

- **Hotmail** Hotmail is Web-based e-mail. You can read and receive e-mail messages from any computer in the world with an Internet connection and a Web browser that supports graphics.
- **Outlook Web Access** Using Microsoft Exchange Server and Microsoft Outlook® Web Access (OWA), users can access data on the server by using an Internet browser from a UNIX, Macintosh, or Microsoft Windows®-based computer.

MAPI (Messaging Application Programming Interface)

MAPI is used with Outlook in conjunction with a Microsoft Exchange Server mail server. MAPI is a lot like IMAP (in fact, it's an anagram of it), but it provides a wider array of features when you use it from within Outlook.

SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol)

Most (but not all) e-mail systems use SMTP to send e-mail messages across the Internet, from an e-mail client to an e-mail server. That's why you need to specify both the incoming server (POP3, IMAP, and so on) and the outgoing server, the SMTP server, when you set up your e-mail accounts.