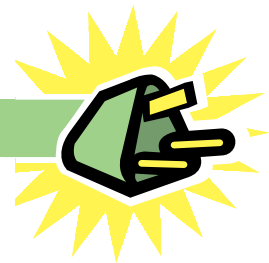


Decoding Technology

E-Mail

by Tim Walker and Chip Donohue



E-mail has become an essential tool for child care professionals. Use e-mail as an effective and efficient tool for communicating with parents and staff, and for exchanging ideas, sharing information and resources, and networking with other professionals.

Tech Terms

- **E-mail:** Short for electronic mail. A network service that allows any user on the Internet to send an electronic message to anyone else on the Internet who has an e-mail address.
- **Internet Service Provider (ISP):** A company that provides online services such as Internet access and e-mail for a monthly fee.
- **Free E-mail Provider:** A company or organization that provides free e-mail as a community service or as a means to promote their Web site and sell advertisements.
- **E-mail Program:** Software used for sending, receiving, and filing e-mail messages. All e-mail programs can read and write using plain text format and most are also HTML compatible.
- **File Attachment:** A file attached to and sent along with an e-mail message.
- **Distribution List:** A common type of mailing list where information can be sent to multiple e-mail addresses simultaneously. Typically, only the user who created the list can use it to send messages.

- **Spam:** Junk e-mail sent unsolicited and in bulk, to advertise products or services or to publicize a message.
- **Virus:** A destructive type of software program that attempts to disrupt the normal operation of a computer by copying itself over and over, or by rewriting or deleting information from storage devices. They are often spread using file attachments.
- **Virus Detection Program:** A software program to detect, diagnose, and destroy computer viruses.

For more e-mail terms see the glossary at <http://email.about.com/od/getstartedwithemail/1/blglossary.htm>.

Tech Tools

E-mail programs have different ways of working, but all have similar functions and features that you can learn to use.

- **"Send" options** — When you are addressing e-mail you have three choices in the header lines: To:, Cc: (Carbon copy), and Bcc: (Blind carbon copy). To: is used to designate the primary recipient(s) of the message. Cc: is a copy of the message that is sent to an identified recipient, who is not the

primary person the message is being sent to. Bcc: is a copy of an e-mail message sent to a recipient whose e-mail address does not appear in the message. Every recipient of a message can see the To: and Cc: recipients, but any Bcc: recipients will not be visible.

- **Anti-virus software** — Many e-mail programs now include virus-scanning software, or you can purchase software to add protection when using e-mail. These programs scan your incoming mail for viruses. Remember that virus scanners can only detect known viruses, so keep your program up-to-date.
- **Spam filter software** — ISPs and some e-mail programs also include spam filters that assess incoming e-mail and prevent unknown or suspect messages from reaching your Inbox by directing them to a spam or junk mail folder instead. Many



Tim Walker is director of technology for the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University. He oversees all technology-related initiatives including training, instructional design and delivery, Web site development, and technical assistance.

Chip Donohue, PhD, is the director of Early Childhood Professional Development Programs in the School of Continuing Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where he develops and teaches online courses for child care administrators and offers eTeaching Institutes for early childhood faculty and trainers.



programs allow you to set priorities for how incoming messages are assessed, and to indicate which messages are spam and which you want to receive.

- **Folders** — Use folders in your e-mail program to manage messages from your Inbox so that you can save and easily retrieve them later. Create folders, name them, and drag and drop e-mail messages into the folders just as you do in your word processing program and other applications.
- **Contacts** — Create a contact list of names and e-mail addresses for people you send e-mail to and receive messages from. When you receive a message from a new source, add the person's name and address to your contacts so that you can easily send messages to them in the future. And use your contacts to create distribution lists for groups of people you frequently send messages to.

Tech Tips

To make the most of your e-mail program, pay attention to these dos and don'ts:

- **Before opening attachments** — To lower your risk, never open or save an attachment unless you know the source of the message. If you think the attachment might be important, double-check with the sender first. If you don't know who it is from or the subject is not specific, delete it. It's better to be safe than sorry. Common sense about managing unknown e-mail and attachments and the use of virus scanning software can help prevent problems.
- **Opening attachments** — When you receive a message with an attachment, double-click on the attachment icon to open it. Your computer will open whatever program is needed to view it. Some e-mail programs show the attachment as a link at the top of the message, and in others you have to scroll down to find it.

Tech Links

- **Free E-mail Providers Guide**
www.fepg.net
- ***A Beginner's Guide to Effective Email*** by Kaitlin Duck Sherwood
http://everythingemail.net/email_help_tips.html
- **Get started with e-mail from About.com**
<http://email.about.com/od/getstartedwithemail/>
- ***8 e-mail mistakes that make you look bad*** by Kim Komando
www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/resources/technology/communications/8_email_mistakes_that_make_you_look_bad.msp
- ***The Top Twelve E-Mail Mistakes That Can Sabotage Your Career*** by Lydia Ramsey
www.businessknowhow.com/growth/email-mistakes.htm
- ***Essential E-Mail Etiquette*** by Wenkai Tay
<http://techsoup.org/howto/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=510>
- ***Netiquette Home Page*** by Virginia Shea
www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html
- ***The Net: User Guidelines and Netiquette*** by Arlene Rinaldi
www.fau.edu/netiquette/net/netiquette.html

- **"Mailbox full"** — If you use a free e-mail provider you may only have a small amount of storage space allocated for saving messages (even well known e-mail providers limit storage space). That means your mailbox can fill up quickly. If this happens, any new messages will not be accepted and senders will be notified that their message was undeliverable. Keep your mailbox cleared out. Print out or save messages to your hard drive so you have maximum space for incoming e-mail.

- **"No attachments accepted"** — Some e-mail accounts will only accept attachments from senders you have approved or sometimes will not accept attachments at all. This has become common practice with the influx of computer viruses spread through attachments. If you are not receiving attachments correctly, please check with your e-mail provider about modifying the settings to your account.

- **"I never got your message"** — Spam filters on e-mail programs may redirect incoming messages from your Inbox to a spam or junk mail folder. It's a good idea to check this folder regularly to be sure that messages from known senders haven't been accidentally sent here.

Sources

Walker, T., & Donohue, C. (2004, January). Decoding technology: E-mail, Listservs, and Distribution Lists. *Exchange*, 155(20-21).
www.ChildCareExchange.com

Coming in
November/December 2005:
Decoding Technology:
Parent Communication