Outlook and Outlook Express: Brothers, not twins

Applies to: Microsoft Office Outlook 2003

Print

Crabby Office Lady

E-mail communication has become as natural as breathing. But when you have both Outlook and Outlook Express on your computer, which one should you use? Let's take a closer look so that you can decide which one is right for you.

Crabby Office Lady columns
Crabby's blog
Crabby's podcasts

Many of you have written to me asking burning questions about Microsoft Outlook® Express. I'm going to say this just once, so listen up:

Outlook Express is NOT an Office product

(This doesn't mean to say that I don't care about it or can't offer you some modicum of advice on it. I'm just saying that it's not part of the Microsoft Office System.)

Outlook Express is a basic e-mail program that is included with Microsoft Internet Explorer. It's free, and while it allows you to send and receive e-mail, it doesn't do all the wild and wonderful things that its big brother Microsoft Outlook® can do (which is not free, unless you're a pirate). And so, you may wonder, what is the point of this column if Outlook Express isn't an Office product? And furthermore, what's the point of even using Outlook Express when Outlook has so many more bells and whistles?

Frankly, that *is* the point: You have a choice. Maybe you need neither bells nor whistles. Maybe bells and whistles scare you. Maybe you're not interested in purchasing bells and whistles at this time since bells and whistles do not impress you in the least.

And because so many of you write about Outlook Express (just to annoy me, no doubt), I've decided to devote an entire table to fleshing out some of the similarities and differences between the two programs. Then you can make up your mind as to which one is right for you.

NOTE While you *can* use both Outlook and Outlook Express on the same computer, you need to think carefully about how you're going to use each program. At work, you may choose to use Outlook for both your personal account and your corporate account. Or, you may want to use Outlook for your work e-mail and Outlook Express exclusively for your private e-mail. Consider this: If you read a piece of e-mail in Outlook Express, it stays in Outlook Express until you delete it. This means it won't be there for you when you are feeling more Outlook-ish later in the day because you already downloaded it from your e-mail server (to another program). What I'm saying is that you probably don't want to access the *same* e-mail account on the *same* computer using two different programs — the e-mails on that account will then be divided between two different programs on the same computer.

Another note What I said in the first note about using both programs on the same computer is completely moot if you use an IMAP server. (This means that all of your e-mail stays on the server, so it doesn't matter where you go to retrieve it. It's always in the folder you create on the server until you delete it or until the spam cops come and take it —and you — away.) The same also applies to any Web-DAV account, which includes MSN and MSN Hotmail. If some of the terms I'm using are starting to confuse you, read my column Demystify e-mail terms and get on with your life. Then get right back here.

FEATURES		OUTLOOK EXPRESS	OUTLOOK 2003 AND 2002

Feature		
Ability to send and receive e-mail	👍	👍
Support for IMAP, HTTP, and POP Internet e-mail servers	👍	👍
Support for Microsoft Exchange Server (Our messaging platform, which makes online forms, scheduling, and collaboration possible)	👎	👍
Address book and Contacts folder (Used to store and retrieve e-mail addresses)	👍	👍
Support for multiple address books	👎	👍
Support for a fully-integrated calendar (Includes meeting and event scheduling, appointments, and group calendars)	👎	👍
Tasks folder (A list of personal or work-related errands that you want to track through completion)	👎	👍
Junk mail filter	👎	👍
Notes folder (The electronic equivalent of paper sticky notes)	👎	👍
Support for newsgroups (A newsgroup is a collection of messages posted by individuals to a news server, or a computer that can host thousands of newsgroups) NOTE While it may appear that Outlook 2003 does have newgroup support, when you launch the newsreader, it actually opens in an Outlook Express window.	👍	👎
Signatures and stationery	👍	👍
Secure e-mail messaging	👍	👍
Auto backup (archive) functionality This keeps your mailbox manageable. You need to store old items that you want to keep but don't need immediate access to, and you also need a way to move those old items to the archive location automatically.	👎	👍

And there you have it. There are, of course, other features that these two programs share, and then there are other features that are particular to Outlook on its own or to Outlook in cahoots with Microsoft Exchange Server. But you get the main idea.

For more information about migrating to and fro (or fro and to), or if you want to know more about each program before deciding, take a look at the **See also** section of this column.

Look at it this way: Sometimes you want a full-course dinner with all the fixins', and sometimes you want to just swing by the drive-through. If you're like me, a well-balanced diet of both will keep you and your communications healthy.

"The first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want." — Ben Stein

About the author

[Annik Stahl,](#) the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

Crabby Office Lady columns
Crabby's blog
Crabby's podcasts