

All,

Email has become one of the most important forms of communications today and a fact of life. Besides keeping in touch with your friends and family, we receive information from our investments, hobbies, travel, purchases, etc, etc, etc.

I find it odd that people (especially kids it seems) jump from one email account to another every time that they change their ISP. They don't realize how disconnected they can become when they do this. Did they tell everyone they were moving? Do they remember everyone who has their email address? How about banks, credit cards, shopping web sites, video sites, blogs, etc, etc?

I am sure you have noticed email addresses (typically of friends and family) that spontaneously go bad from one month to the next. If you maintain group lists like I do, this is a constant headache. Where did those people go? Why didn't they tell me?

So how useful is your current email address? If you are using your local ISP's email account (Comcast, AT&T, etc), what would happen when you move and stop using them for your Internet access? Do you have to change your email address? If you are using a corporate email account, what happens when you change companies or retire? In both cases you will have to stop using your current email address and let everyone know about it. You will also probably lose any saved email and your address book. This is obviously painful and any transition will have to be done fairly quickly (in the midst of moving or retiring).

What is a better approach to email account? My suggestion is for you to make the transition to an Internet based, ISP agnostic, email service. You will be able to reach this email account from any computer, anywhere in the global, probably keep the same email address forever and retain a single address book.

The most widely used Internet email systems are Google Email (<http://gmail.google.com>), Yahoo Email (<http://mail.yahoo.com>) or Hot Mail (<http://hotmail.com>). These systems are free for basic service (which is probably all that you will need) and generally have unlimited storage space. Optional features (i.e. your own domain) are extra.

There will be the one-time pain involved in the migration to the new email account, but you can take several months to spread it out, and only need to do it once.

So let's get going!

Migration Steps

- 1) Sign up for the new global email account. <http://mail.yahoo.com> or <http://gmail.google.com>. I prefer Yahoo as they are a more complete ISP (at least currently). Don't even consider AOL.
- 2) Suggestion – Create an email account name which is at least somewhat business-like (i.e. doesn't embarrass you when handing it out), is memorable, is easily spoken, isn't confusing when given over the phone and relates back to the owner. This makes it easier for people to remember.
 - a. Good: johnderosa, pilotbob
 - b. Bad: littlekittymeow, superduderino, qt3_14159, toulouselautrec

- 3) Send an email to everyone in your current email address book to let them know that they should begin using your new email account. Most email systems have a way to send an email to the entire address book at one time.
- 4) Difficult part #1 - Try to remember every other place that knows your email address and change those too. Airlines? Investments? Credit cards? Amazon? PayPal? Amazon? Ebay? etc, etc, etc.
- 5) Difficult part #2 – Transfer your address book. Some email systems allow you to save (export to a .) your address book to a file (typically .CSV) and then upload (import) it to your new email system. See [Appendix A](#) below for more help. Manually transferring is the only other alternative.
- 6) Do the following to remind people to use your new email address and to catch those that you didn't remember to tell (NOTE: may not be available in your current email client);
 - a. If possible, set an "out of office" or "vacation" message that replies to all email and includes your new email address.
 - b. If possible, set up your current email to forward all email to your new global email account.
 - c. If you cannot do one other the above, then routinely monitor your old email account for 2-3 months and monthly thereafter.
- 7) Finished!

Which Email Client? – So how are you going to read your email? There are two basic choices;

- POP Mail Client (Outlook Express, Eudora, etc.)
 - Background
 - A piece of software which is loaded on your computer and started each time that you want to read email.
 - Advantages
 - These clients can be desirable as they are feature rich.
 - Can read email while the computer is not attached to the Internet (following connecting and downloading). This can save time/money on slower (dial-up) connections.
 - Disadvantages
 - Each time that you login to read your email, all of your new email (and attachments) is downloaded to your computer. This can significantly delay the download especially with large attachments and/or slow Internet connections. This was born out of the days when ISP's didn't want you store your email on their (expensive) servers. These days are typically long gone with minimum (free) server storage space measured in the giga-bytes.
 - You will only be able to read your old (downloaded) email on this one computer, and will be unable to read your old email on any other computer (friend's, library, etc). This includes your email address book. If you are as mobile as I am, this can be very important.
 - Some clients allow you to configure them to "retain mail on server" or "only download attachments upon request" which can help these situations.
 - Some email providers (i.e. Yahoo) charge extra to allow POP access. Some (AOL) don't support it at all.

- If you change/upgrade computers or have a crash, you will have to figure out how to move/restore all the old mail. Where is it stored?
- Web Mail Clients (Yahoo, Google, Hotmail, etc.)
 - Background
 - A web based tool to read email.
 - Advantages
 - These clients have the advantage of residing “in the ether” via a dedicated web site. Thus the email can be accessed from any Internet aware “device” (computer, Blackberry, iPhone, etc) with an Internet connection and a web browser. This also includes your email address book.
 - Reading email is fast as nothing is automatically downloaded to your computer. Of course you can manually download any attachments.
 - Does not take up disk space on your computer (except for attachment downloads).
 - Computer upgrades or crashes will not affect you.
 - Disadvantages
 - Fewer features as compared to POP email but that gap is narrowing rapidly.
 - Must maintain a continuous Internet connection.

Conclusion: I exclusively use web base email clients and services. I haven't used a POP client for more than 7 years and now strictly use Yahoo email.

Your Own Domain? - To truly future proof your email, and so that you will never ever have to change it again, you should buy your own domain (i.e. derosaweb.com). Even if you change your underlying email provider, the email address will remain the same. The simplest domain setup I have found is <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/domains>. It isn't free but very cheap (as low as \$10/year).

Good luck, John
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<http://derosaweb.net>

Appendix A

AOL Address Book Exporting

http://www.askdavetaylor.com/how_do_i_export_my_america_online_aol_address_book_and_email.html

Yahoo Address Book Importing

<http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/mail/yahoomail/manage/manage-09.html>

GMail Address Book Importing

<http://mail.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=8301>