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Take Back Your Inbox! How to Customize Your E-mail Filters

By **Eduardo DeLeón**

Recent versions of many e-mail programs include a function that performs automatic junk mail ("spam") filtering, saving you time and grief. Programs such as NYUHome's webmail client, Eudora v.6, Netscape v.7.1, Apple Mail, Microsoft Outlook v.2003, and Outlook Express have automatic junk mail filtering features that can remove more than 90% of unwanted e-mails from your inbox.

These programs then offer a variety of options for handling this junk mail (e.g., send it straight to the Trash, or move it to a "Spam" folder for review), allowing you to customize your mail program to your needs.

Filtering E-mail in NYUHome

In NYUHome, automatic spam filtering is performed by PureMessage software. To begin with, PureMessage assigns each piece of incoming non-NYU e-mail a spam rating, based on how many characteristics of junk mail it contains (e.g., "click here" links, many exclamations points). PureMessage uses a system of "X's" to score each message (the more "X's", the more likely it is to be spam) and adds this rating to the header of each message.

To activate spam filtering in the NYUHome webmail client, log in at <http://home.nyu.edu> and click on "Preferences". In the window that opens, under "Spam Filtering," click on "Set!" You can then select a filtering level of Light, Medium, Strict, or None, according to your preference. When enabled, this tool will automatically move messages it has rated as junk mail to a folder called "Spam", where they are automatically deleted after 30 days.

You should be sure to review the contents of the Spam folder periodically to ensure

that no legitimate messages have been sent there by mistake. See the article [The New NYUHome](#) in this issue for more information about NYUHome's spam rating and filtering capabilities.

Filtering E-mail With Eudora

The Eudora v.6 desktop e-mail client also offers spam-filtering capabilities. NYU community members can configure Eudora to use NYUHome's spam ratings to help sort your mail. Eudora can be set to take a specified action (such as "Send to Trash") based on the "score" or number of X's that PureMessage has added to each message's header. Please note that if you use Eudora to check your NYUHome e-mail, you should only have a spam filter activated in one of the programs, not both.

To configure Eudora to filter your messages:

1. Go to the Tools menu and select Filters. Click "New" to create a new filter.
2. In the "Match" section on the right, select the "Incoming" and "Manual" checkboxes. This will apply the filter to all incoming messages, and whenever you manually request to filter messages.
3. In the "Header" field, enter "X-Spam-Level:" (without the quotation marks). If you would like to filter for other conditions, you can select a different field from the pull-down list.
4. In the next field, select "contains".
5. In the next field (a textbox), enter XXXXXX for light filtering, XXXX for medium filtering, or XXX for strict filtering of spam. The more likely it is that the message is spam, the more X's it will have in the X-Spam-Level field.
6. Next, select the action to be taken if and when such a message is detected. There are many actions to choose from, but we recommend that you "Transfer To" a designated spam folder of your choice, rather than deleting the message outright. This will give you the opportunity to review the messages in the spam folder before they are deleted, an important safeguard since the spam filter will occasionally mistake legitimate e-mail for spam.

Another way to create filters in Eudora is to select an offending message from your message list and make a filter out of it. To do this, select a message that you consider spam, then go to the "Special" menu and select "Make Filter". This will take the currently selected message's header information and allow you to edit a filter for it. You will then be able to select from the same options described above.

Filtering E-mail With Microsoft Outlook

To filter spam with Microsoft Outlook, follow these steps:

1. Go to the Tools menu and select the "Rules Wizard" option.
2. The "Rules Wizard" window will open. In the section that reads "Apply changes to this folder", select your Inbox from the pull-down menu.
3. Click "New" to create a new rule.
4. Select the option for "Start from a blank rule". Make sure the "Check messages when they arrive" option is highlighted, then click "Next".
5. In the section entitled "Which condition(s) do you want to check?", select the box that reads "with specific words in the message header".
6. Under "Rule description", click on the underlined portion that reads "specific words" to edit the selection.
7. The "Search Text" window will open. This is where you define the spam filtering message header and set the level of spam filtering that you desire.
 - a. To choose the "Light" setting, type: X-Spam-Level: XXXXXX
 - b. To choose the "Medium" setting, type: X-Spam-Level: XXXX
 - c. To choose the "Strict" setting, type: X-Spam-Level: XXX

8. After adding the text, click "Add", then "OK". Then click "Next" to advance to the next screen.
9. In the section entitled "What do you want to do with the message?", check the box that reads "Move it to the specified folder". Under "Rule description", click on the underlined portion that reads "specified" to edit the selection.
10. A window will pop up asking you to select a destination folder from your "Personal Folders" or create a new folder. Click on the "New" button to create a new folder.
11. Create a folder called "Spam" (or any other name of your choice). This will be the folder in which mail filtered as spam will be stored. Click "OK" to save your new folder, then click "Next".
12. The "Add any exceptions" screen will allow you to add other settings to your filter. We recommend that you do not add any other settings and instead click "Next".
13. Name your new filter rule (by default, the filter itself is listed as the name). Make sure to check the box that reads "Turn on this rule". Click "Finish" to put your changes into effect, then click "OK" to return to your mailbox.

Filtering E-mail in PINE

1. In PINE, press [M] to go to the [M]ain menu, then press [S] for [S]etup, [R] for [R]ules, and [F] for [F]ilters.
2. Next, press [A] to [A]dd a new filter. Then, in the nickname field, type in a name for the new filter (e.g., Spam Filter).
3. In the "Current Folder Type" field, select "E-mail" so that it runs this filter on all e-mail boxes, or specify the mailbox on which you want to run filters.
4. Select the option "Add Extra Headers" and add the header "X-Spam-Level" (without the quotation marks; do not use a colon after "Level").
5. Next, select the header "X-Spam-Level" to edit it, and enter "XXXXXX" for light filtering, "XXXX" for medium filtering, or "XXX" for strict filtering (do not include quotation marks). Remember, the more X's in the X-Spam-Level field, the more likely the message is spam.
6. Then, scroll down the page to specify the action(s) to be taken on messages with the criteria you have specified. In the section "Actions Begin Here", select the Filter Action that you want: "Just change status", "Delete", or "Move to folder". We recommend that you select "Move to folder" and then either enter the name of a folder or press Control-T to select a folder from your mail collection lists.
7. When you are done entering all the information, press [E] to [E]xit. Then, if you are done creating filters, press [E] again to [E]xit the filters configuration.

Additional Information

If you have any questions about configuring your e-mail client to filter your messages, please contact the ITS Client Services Center at 1-212-998-3333 or [its.clientservices@nyu.edu](mailto:clientservices@nyu.edu), open from 8:00 a.m. to midnight, Monday through Friday, and from noon to midnight, Saturday and Sunday.

Customized spam filtering is also available in the Macintosh version of Outlook Express. For configuration instructions, and for additional information about e-mail spam, please browse the NYUHome Help website at <http://home.nyu.edu/help/mail/spamfilter.nyu>.

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