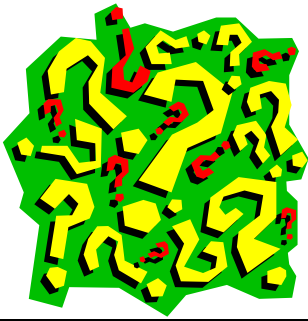## TOPIC THREE: DEALING WITH THE MAIL

The aims and objectives of this topic are to:

- Outline ways of dealing with incoming mail.
- Discuss email protocols and file handling
- Look at the requirements for choosing outgoing mail methods

	The following web sites have a lot of useful information: www.post.com.au www.fastway.com.au www.couriersplease.com.au
After you have read pages 26-31, go to your assessment manual and complete the tasks.	

DEALING WITH THE MAIL

Incoming mail:

A regular time each day should be set aside for sorting the incoming mail, which should be sorted as required by your organisation.

All organisations have their own protocols, but generally all incoming mail not marked personal or confidential is opened and stamped with the receipt date. It is then sorted and distributed by internal courier or into pigeon holes dependent upon the size and number of departments in an organisation.

This could be:

> Invoices and receipts to accounts department or financial controller
>
> Orders to sales department or sales staff
>
> Correspondence to the addressees

It is usual practice to send the envelopes stapled or paper clipped with the correspondence in case there is information about posting date or sender details that need to be verified if there are queries.

As an administration assistant in a small organisation, you might be allocated responsibilities for entering financial transactions or processing orders/requests for information.

You should first sort the mail for your workstation into different piles and assigned priorities:

> Bills for payment
>
> Forms and reports for processing or filing
>
> Requests for information
>
> Must deal with immediately
>
> Can wait till later
>
> Recycle bin immediately (for junk mail)

There are four useful ways of keeping correspondence on file, including faxes, if there are only a limited number of in/out mail and fax items a day:

> Lever arch folders
>
> Files in filing cabinets
>
> Contact database management systems
>
> Electronic versions only of outgoing mail

If there is a need to keep hard copies of forms, faxes and correspondence for legal or business reasons, then a filing cabinet will generally be the best answer.

Mail security:

Most mail is perfectly safe to handle, but there are pranksters who send hoax contaminated items and bomb threat parcels. Real terrorists are very rarely encountered.

While not being unduly alarmist, there are some things you should do when receiving mail from an unknown source, particularly if the person is not known to the business.

Any letter or parcel with white dust on it should be reported to the police as it might be a hoax, but could be a contaminated item.

Any suspicious parcel, especially one just left at the door, must be referred to the supervisor. Almost all bomb threats are hoaxes and the person phones to tell you what they have done. However, if you hear something moving in the parcel, call the police. It is not unknown for 'hate mail' to come in the form of a venomous snake or other beasties.
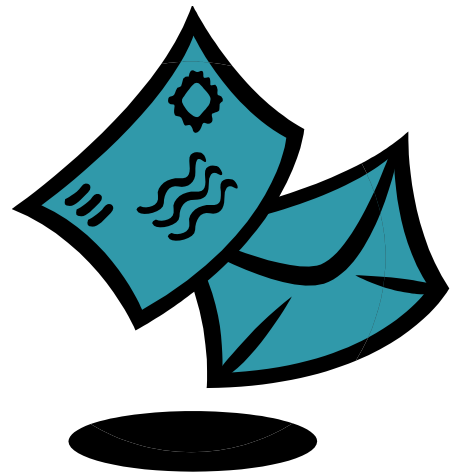
ORGANISING EMAILS

Incoming emails:

A regular time or times should be set aside for checking emails, such as when you first log on to the computer, just before lunch and again. Having regular times prevents your becoming 'overwhelmed' by the constant need to keep checking for updates.

- Important and flagged e-mails should be dealt with as soon as possible.
- You can flag those items you do not respond to immediately but reserve for the 'do this later' category. Most email programs have a 'For Follow Up' folder to which you can transfer
- If there is a need to keep the correspondence, either print it out or send it to a local folder reserved for that correspondent.
- All other mail gets sent immediately to the 'deleted' folder when rejected or dealt with.

email security:

It is very important to ensure that you have a good virus protection and firewall on your workstation computer. Trojan viruses will attach themselves to your contact data in your email program and use your address to spam either unwanted emails or spread the virus. Viruses can also attach themselves to documents sent to you. You should never open a document form someone you do not know. Hackers can now send a virus attached to picture files, PowerPoints and other fun messages you might get from acquaintances.

Use the preview box in your email program to delete unwanted spam and unknown and non-business related emails immediately without opening them.

Be very careful about what Internet sites you look at on your work computer. Many of the sites that offer free screen savers or special deals attach 'cookies' to your files that allows hackers to attack you or will open you up to spammers.

Sending emails:

There are some conventions in sending emails which are important to preserve privacy.

Firstly, you should not send Spam emails as this is illegal and will lose the business goodwill. If you do want to send out group emails, it is better to ask the person if they want to be on your mailing list. You then log them in the contact and transfer the permission email to a special folder in the in-box.

If you need to send out marketing emails or newsletters, you must always include an opt out clause so that the recipient can tell you if they want to be taken off the data base. Sometimes people give you permission initially, but later decide to opt out. An example of good wording for this might be:

"As a former client of our business, we thought you might like to know about our new services. However, if you do not want to receive further information from us, simply reply with the word 'delete' in the subject and we will take your contact details from our mailing list."

When sending emails out to multiple participants, it is only correct to list their names in the CC dialogue box if the people are well known to each other or working on the same project.

You could, for example add other internal contacts to the CC box in the following email.
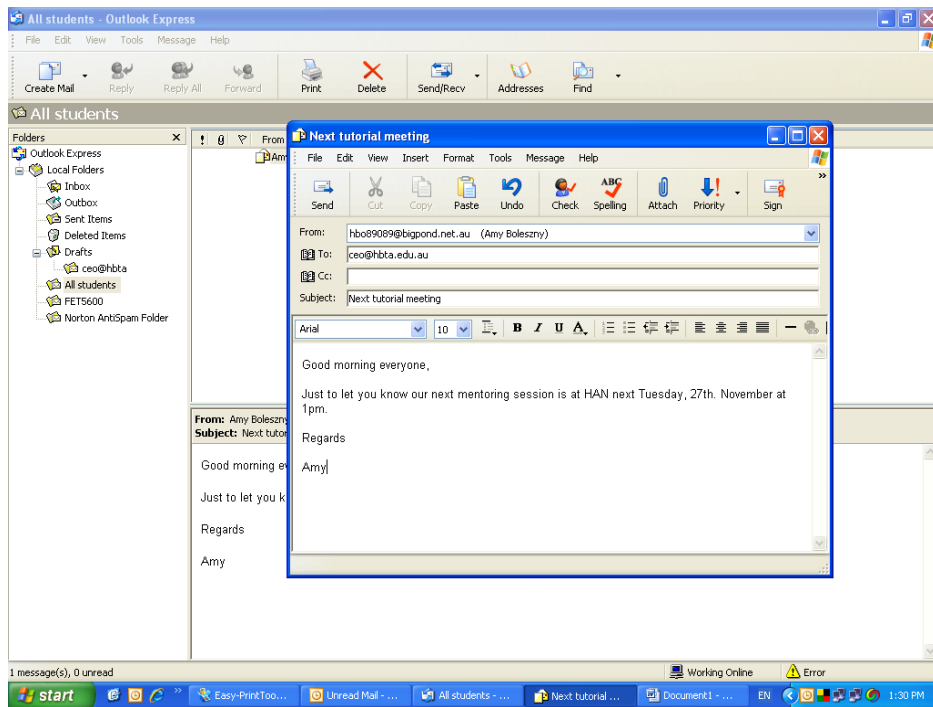
All other group mailings should use the BCC dialogue box which is accessed by clicking on the 'To' button and then entering contact details

As you can see by comparing this picture with the one on page 31, an extra dialogue box has appeared on the screen.

Using BCC preserves the privacy of the recipients and is considered 'good etiquette' as this information does not show up at the recipient end. Only the sender knows the names of the people on the list.
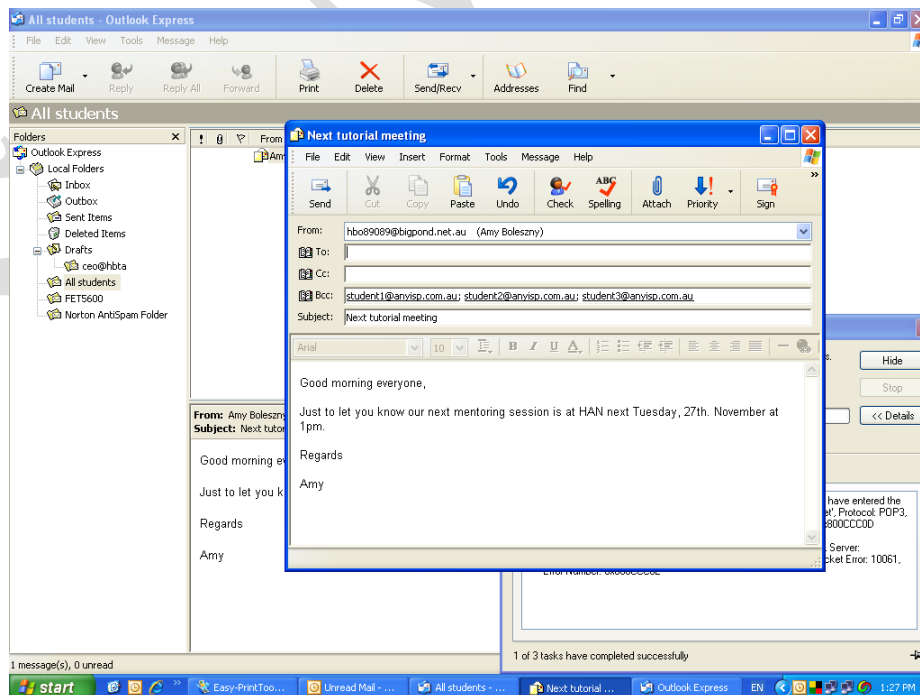
When you press 'Send' the email will go first to the 'Outbox' until the message has been transmitted. It will then go automatically to the 'Sent Items' folder for storage.

Transferring emails to other folders:

Automatic transfer occurs from the 'in' or 'out 'box to the 'Deleted Items' folder when you highlight an email and press delete. This then stays stored in your computer until you click on the 'Tools' menu on the toolbar and select 'Empty Deleted Items Folder'.

It is good practice to review the names of the emails in the list before you make this move as sometimes emails you want to keep do get sent there by error.

It is also important to check the 'Junk E- Mail' and the 'Anti-Spam Folder' regularly as your security program may automatically assign incoming emails to these folders which are not either junk or Spam.

For example, for some reason the emails coming in from one of our trainers is always marked 'Spam', so I have to remember to check this box daily or I might miss something.

This is an action triggered by the security program and firewall, both of which have minds of their own!

Transferring files across to local folders is easy. Go to the 'Edit' menu on the toolbar and click on 'Move to Folder' command line. You will then get a window that looks like the one below.

© Sea Eagle Publications, 2008
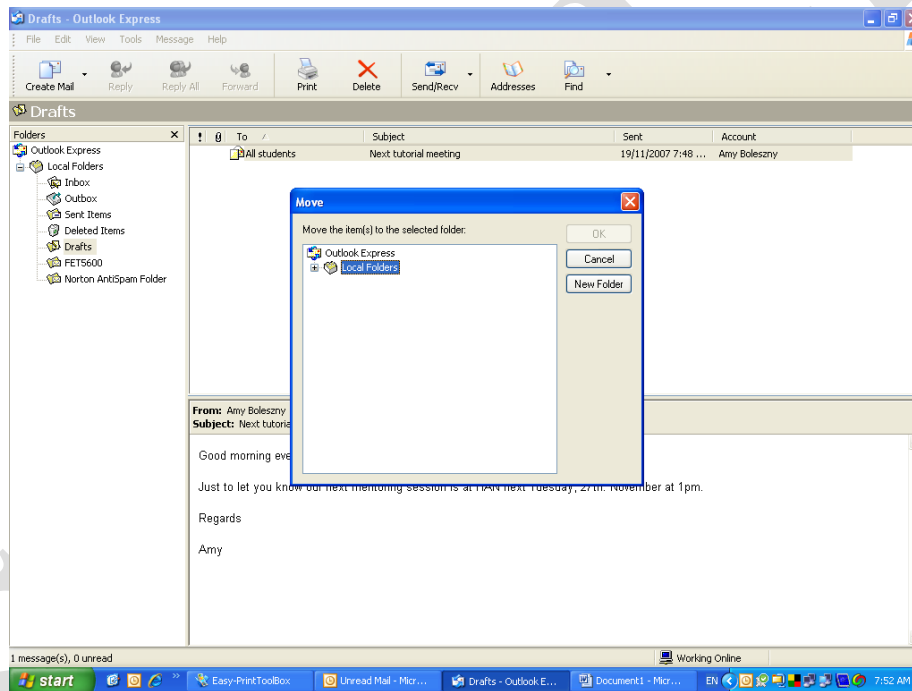
From there you click the 'New Folder' button if you need to allocate a special place for the subject or contact group.
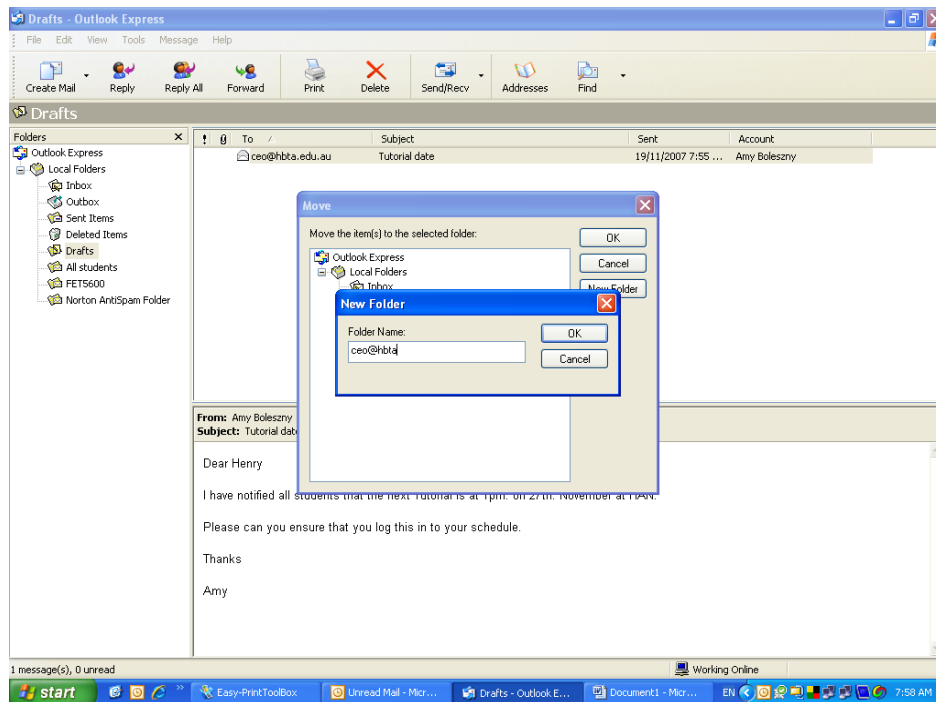
Once you click on the "OK' button, a new folder will appear on the left hand side list. You can then tell the program to move the email to this specific folder.

Archiving emails:

Most email programs have an automatic archiving command that activates at regular intervals, or you can move items to the Archive folder as you need to.

ASSESSMENT RECORD

Student Name:	
Student Number:	
Postcode:	
e-mail:	
Assessor/Trainer:	
Telephone:	
e-mail:	

Assessment for topic:	Tasks		Date	CA	NYC
Three: Dealing with the mail	1.	The mail system			
	2.	Project			

Assessor's comments:

_____

_____

Assessor Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____

Sign-off date: _____

Assessment Six: The mail system

When it comes in the mail needs to be sorted and distributed to:

Type of mail	Incoming mail sorted and distributed to
General correspondence	
Bills for payment	
Letters of complaint	
Trade product catalogues	

A good email policy is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

A good way to protect against viruses and spammers is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Assessment Six: The mail system

An outgoing mail log books should record the following:

Type of mail	Type of entry required	Sticker?

Tick the items above where you would keep the 'Sender to Keep' sticker

Organising emails:

This is a practical session to be organised by your trainer.

You will be taken through the following steps:

- Writing test emails

- Transferring drafts to Drafts Folder

- Setting up storage folders in inboxes and Sent Items folders.

- Transferring dummy emails to folders

- Deleting files

Assessor to check that the following tasks have been satisfactorily completed:

Task	Check
Writing test emails	
Transferring drafts to Drafts Folder	
Setting up storage folders in inboxes and Sent Items folders.	
Transferring dummy emails to folders	
Deleting unwanted files	

   Assessor initials:

9

Assessment Seven: Project

Your supervisor has asked you to look at the charges for mail and courier services because there is a need to pick both the most cost effective and the fastest method of sending urgent mail and freight interstate.

Visit the following web site and find out about their services and charges.

www.post.com.au

www.fastway.com.au

www.couriersplease.com.au

What do you recommend for the following:

Type of mail/parcel	Service Selected	Faster?	Cheaper
Urgent letter			
Legal documents for which signature is required			
8 kg. parcel not needed urgently			
8 kg. parcel needed urgently			
3 kg parcel needed urgently			

What would you say to your supervisor to justify your choices?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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