



E-mail Potpourri of Pet Peeves

As the e-mail administrators for the DBUG forum, we see a ton of e-mail. And as we waded through all the “bounces” and improperly formatted e-mail, we have definitely formed our own list of pet peeves about how e-mail should and should not be sent. While we try to minimize our function as the “e-mail police” on the DBUG forum and understand that it is a “free country”, it would certainly help lower our irritation and stress quotient if you would bear the following items in mind the next time you send e-mail.

1. Please don't send e-mail in HTML (web tagging) format. Yes, we admit that when we get a nice piece of HTML (i.e. web tagged) e-mail, it can be very striking and attractive. *But*, we would say that only 1 out of 20 pieces of HTML e-mail qualifies for that compliment. The rest look junky, often with overlapping text, odd font combinations, and weird effects. Keep in mind that with the variety of systems out there, your HTML e-mail may look very differently than you intended. We have banned HTML mail from the DBUG forum (it gets bounced out for conversion and re-posting) for more practical than aesthetic reasons in that it creates havoc with the digests, but we wish we could ban it altogether (just call us Don E-mail Quixote). And yes, we know you AOL 6.0 users have no choice but to send in HTML format. But further, some of you don't even realize that you are sending in HTML format. So please check and change your settings to “plain text” (Look in *Edit/Preferences* menu or *Tools/Options/Send* menu or similar.)

2. Please set your Linewrap to less than 80 characters. If you receive e-mail that looks odd with segmented lines of variegated length, you can bet that the sender

has their e-mail set to wrap lines at something over 80. Many mailing list servers automatically enforce an 80 character maximum on each line, so anything over 80 gets chopped off and sent to a new line. While you are thinking about line-wrap, consider also that when someone replies to your e-mail, a common format is to add two characters “>_” before each quoted line. So if you set your linewrap to 78, most correspondents who reply to you will have your quotes line wrap correctly.

3. Please Edit Down. Many e-mail programs by default include the whole originating message after or before a reply. If you read a great deal of e-mail you quickly appreciate the courtesy of those who pare down the originating message to its most essential essence and get rid of all the extraneous headers and footers. Editing down is particularly important to the DBUG-Digest readers. When you read messages individually, the occasional full reply is no big deal, but when they are compiled sequentially in the digest, it is very irritating and confusing to have to wade through the entire originating message.

4. Please be careful with attachments. Don't blindly send attachments to someone without checking with them first. There is nothing more irritating than to be on a phone modem waiting for a 3 megabyte file to download from someone where you have no inkling what its about. Even worse is to get an attachment that is in some weird compression format. Attachments like those WIN.DAT signature files that also can wreck havoc. Attachments are also the hiding places for trojan horse viruses (“Anna Kournikova” being the latest one). Attachments are banned from the DBUG forum for all those reasons, and you should take care in how you use them.

5. Please don't assume Spammers got your address from DBUG—because it *ain't* true! We have *never* shared any forum addresses with any outside party and *never* will. The subscription lists are locked. These days, spammers have plenty of other ways to get your address, even if you only use an address for a single use. They have automatic trawlers that go through all the iterations of an address variant. We often get junk e-mail

addressed “apparently to” and know it is from one of those auto-spammers.

6. Please double check your Address and Subject fields before sending. Particularly when you hit the Reply button, double check that your message is going to your intended party (i.e. to the original sender vs. back to the forum for posting.) Blank or inapplicable subject fields are particularly irritating to those who thread their mail or who get the digests.

7. Don't set your e-mail to ask for a receipt. Use this setting only for special uses. As we have told those who add such receipt requests to their DBUG postings, “Do you really want several thousand receipts to flood your e-mail box?” Also be careful about designing your signature text. It should be compact and convey the necessary information about yourself without going overboard. Imagine getting 5 consecutive posts from yourself with overly long signature text or a cutesy quote — if you find it start to get irritating, you *know* others will as well.

8. Make judicious use of the TO vs. CC and BCC (Blind copy, addressee does not see his/her own address) address fields. When TO and FROM are from the same address is almost a sure-fire junk mail sign, or heavy use of the CC and BCC features can arouse great curiosity/irritation/suspicion (*pick one*) from your correspondents. Spammers & mail viruses love to use these hideout tools.

9. When you send a change of address to your entire addressbook or to ask us for a subscription change, please include a note of what your “old” address was. When we have to search our subscription files, sometimes its very hard to guess what your old address might have been. Also try to record/remember what your “real” address is if you have a company alias, or what your old address was if you have had your e-mail forwarded at any point.

10. Please don't forward any e-mail virus reports or “urban legends” without independent corroboration. Check first at <www.Europe.Datafellows.com> or <<http://www.urbanlegends.com>>. 99% of these silly warnings are hoaxes, so please act (or better yet, delete) accordingly. ☐