

Re: Problems with Outlook – help!

Source:

http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Windows/microsoft.public.windows.inetexplorer.ie6_outlookexpress/2004-03/5

From: Steve Cochran (*scochran_at_chattanooga.net*)

Date: 03/20/04

Date: Sat, 20 Mar 2004 05:39:07 -0500

You can try reinstalling IE and OE. See point 5 below.

steve

"Pat Mahoney" <patmahoney@btinternet.com> wrote in message news:2eec3242.0403200131.6f1b28c4@posting.google.com...
> I was 'attacked' by a virus last week which has disabled Outlook
> Express. Although my computer is now 'clean' again, when I try to use
> OE I get error message, "Msimm This operation has performed an
> illegal operation and will be shut down." I am using 'Yahoo/ BT' at
> present for my e mails but it is painfully slow. I would like my
> Outlook Express back with all my saved e mails.
>
> Anybody know anything I can do?
>
> Many thanks,
>
> Pat Mahoney

1. Don't open attachments.

Most computer infections are the result of the user opening email attachments. The attachment usually contains a virus or worm or trojan that infects the system when it is opened.

Because of this tendency of attachments to infect, Microsoft has now set OE to block all attachments. See these articles for explanations:

Cannot Open E-Mail Attachments in Outlook Express After You Install SP1
<http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=329570>

OLEXP Using Virus Protection Features in Outlook Express 6 (Q291387)
<http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q291/3/87.ASP>

Note that Microsoft does not send security patches in email. See this article:
http://www.microsoft.com/technet/security/news/patch_hoax.asp

microsoft.public.windows.inetexplorer.ie6_outlookexpress: Re: Problems with Outlook – help!

If you choose to adjust OE to allow attachments, make sure you save the attachment to disk first and then scan it with your antivirus software.

The most significant thing you can do to prevent such infections, is to educate yourself on what attachments may constitute a threat to your system, and never open any such attachments, no matter who they are from.

2. Turn off Background Compaction.

When a message is deleted, moved or marked as read in an OE message file (dbx), then wasted space is generated in that file, and the folder must be compacted to remove that wasted space.

By default, OE turns on a feature under Tools | Options | Maintenance called "background compaction", which turns itself on if the folders in your message store get too much wasted space. This feature uses 100% CPU time and slows down your system, while it is active. In addition, if the process is somewhat interrupted, then the entire message store can become corrupt.

To prevent such corruption, turn off background compaction under Tools | Options | Maintenance for each Identity you have, and then compact manually and frequently using File | Folder | Compact all. This will make OE more stable.

3. Turn off email scanning in your antivirus software.

Antivirus software invades the Outlook Express program to try and intercept (incoming and, in some cases, outgoing) messages that might contain virus.

The problem with this approach is that the antivirus software can trigger the destruction of an entire message folder or the entire message store, when it attempts to remove a message containing a potential virus.

To prevent the possibility of such destruction occurring, turn off email scanning in your antivirus software. You will still be protected against infection. If you attempt to open a message attachment containing a potential virus, then your antivirus software will recognize that you are attempting to infect your system, and will block you from doing so. The best practice on the user's part is to save an attachment to disk and then scan it with the antivirus software prior to opening it. Messages opened themselves (if you have the latest security updates from Windows Update) will not infect your system — only attachments.

You do not need additional email scanning on top of your system being continuously scanned by antivirus software, so turn off email scanning to prevent destruction of your message store.

4. Recovering lost messages.

The most significant contributors to lost messages are described in points 2 and 3 above. Turn these options off to prevent message store corruption.

If you do lose your messages, you can try using my DBXtract program to attempt to recover the lost messages. Note that dbx files are hidden in Windows 2000 and Windows XP.

<http://www.oehelp.com/DBXtract/>

Alternatively one can also use DBXpress, which is faster and more accurate than DBXtract, and it also has the capability of reading directly from the disk and bypassing the file system.

<http://www.oehelp.com/DBXpress/>

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If you have upgraded your version of IE and OE or your OS version, and all your messages are lost, then see this article (note that the technique in the article does not only apply to the issue addressed in the article title):

OLEXP: Mail Folders, Address Book, and E-mail Messages Are Missing After You Upgrade to Microsoft Windows XP

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb:en-us:313055>

If File | Import | Messages does not work, ignore the error message, which is erroneous in itself, and try one of the following techniques to get your messages back:

a. Right click on each dbx file or a selection of them and go to Properties and clear the read only attribute of the files. Then try File | Import | Messages again.

b. Import the dbx files individually. See the last paragraph on this page for how to do that:

<http://www.oehelp.com/backup.aspx>

c. As a last resort use DBXtract or DBXpress

<http://www.oehelp.com/DBXtract/> or <http://www.oehelp.com/DBXpress/>

See also: <http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/problems/bugs.htm#mailgone>

5. How does one reinstall IE and OE?

This article seems to work for other OSs than just XP:

How to Reinstall or Repair Internet Explorer and Outlook Express

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=KB:EN-US:Q318378>

See point 11 below first.

6. How does one backup and restore or transfer OE messages and settings:

See: <http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/backup/index.htm>

<http://www.oehelp.com/backup.aspx>

Note that there is also a link in this article to MVP David Guess's free OEBackup programs (www.oehelp.com/OEBackup/)

7. Links in email don't work:

see the links on this page

<http://www.oehelp.com/>

8. Outlook Express is slow.

See the various performance issues and how to address them on this page:

<http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/problems/performance.htm>

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9. Outlook Express won't start.

This is usually due to a conflict between what is recorded in the registry and what is in the message store. Often, one can fix this problem by deleting folders.dbx. If that doesn't work, then try moving all the dbx files to another directory and see if that fixes it. Alternatively, see these articles and also point 4 above:

<http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/problems/performance.htm#nostart>

<http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/q245/4/19.asp>

10. Address book information:

see The Windows Address Book

<http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/files/wab.htm>

11. Installation issues:

Most of the problems with a faulty installation are due to other programs running during the install and interfering with the updating of necessary files. Antivirus software is notorious for this. To minimize such interference, in Win98, WinMe, and WinXP go to Start | Run and type msconfig and disable all startup items and non Microsoft services. Then reboot. Then proceed with the installation. Startup items can then be re-enabled.

For additional info see:

Win98: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb:en-us:281965&Product=w98>

WinXP: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb:en-us:310560&Product=winxp>

Since Win2000 does not have msconfig, one has to manually go to this registry key:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run

You can export this key and then delete all values under it. Then disable all antivirus services under Computer Management | Services and then reboot. Then install. After the installation you can import the key back into the registry to restore the values and re-enable the services.

12. Screening unwanted email and Spam

Everybody gets unwanted email these days. Much of this email is either trying to sell you something you probably don't want or else is trying to infect you with a virus via an email attachment. What can you do?

a. Never open an attachment. First save an attachment to disk and then scan it with your antivirus software to ensure it is not infected (make sure your antivirus software definitions are up to date). If the attachment is

from someone you don't know, don't even bother opening it. Its not worth it. See also point 1 above.

b. Screen email. Disable the Preview Pane (you can put a button on the toolbar to turn this on and off). Then go to View | Columns and enable most of the headers. That way you can scan the headers and pick out the various obvious unwanted mail. Once you find messages that you don't want to open, select the headers of those messages without opening the messages and perform a Shift-Delete to permanently remove them from the folder. Once they are removed, they will no longer be accessible, so don't do this on messages you might wish to keep.

c. On messages left that might be worth opening, go to Tools | Options | Read and check the box that says "read all messages in plain text" (available only with IE6 SP1 or WinXP SP1 and higher). Reading in plain text prevents any returns to the spammer's server, so your email address cannot be validated in that fashion. In addition, it prevents malformed or malicious HTML code from executing. If you find the message is worth viewing as HTML, then you can go back to Tools | Options | Read and uncheck the option to read in plain text only and then reopen the message to view it as HTML (note that you can put this button on a toolbar with OETool (www.oehelp.com/OETool/)). You can also use OETool to view the message details without having to open the message. You can also use the "Compact Current Folder" button after deleting to shrink the file size.

d. If you get unwanted email repeatedly from the same source, you can set up message rules to block out some of these messages. See the help file in OE and also

<http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/tips/rules.htm>

and

http://www.mindspring.com/~oe_oh/message_rules.htm.

e. If you find a message that is spam and that offends you or is deceptive, go to Message | Forward as attachment and send it to uce@ftc.gov .

The US Federal Trade Comission is launching a major crackdown on deceptive and offensive spam. Visit their site at www.ftc.gov/spam for more info.

I've left off some issues, but I believe these address the most common problems that users encounter with OE. In addition, please check the websites of the individual OE MVP's that address other issues not listed here:

Tom Koch:

<http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/>

David Guess

http://www.mindspring.com/~oe_oh/

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Jim Pickering

<http://home.comcast.net/~jimpickering/>

Frank Saunders

<http://www.fjsmjs.com/OE/index.htm>

and my site at <http://www.oehelp.com>

If you don't find your problem addressed, then feel free to post a question in these newsgroups and we will be more than happy to respond and attempt to help. Just go to Tools | Accounts | Add | News and add msnews.microsoft.com as a newserver and then you can address your question to the appropriate newsgroup.