



Hour 18

Understanding File Management

Outlook uses a lot of information, from connection settings, navigation, and toolbar customizations to custom forms and, of course, email, calendar, contacts, and other Outlook data.

This hour will help you understand

- Which files Outlook uses
- Where Outlook stores them
- Which files are most important to back up

On occasion, some of these files cause problems for Outlook, I'll tell you some of the more common problems and how to fix them.

Files That Outlook Uses

Outlook uses files to store information it needs. Some of the files are stored on your drive, other data is stored as hidden messages in your mail folders, and some configuration data is stored in the Registry. This hour discusses the files Outlook creates on your hard drive.

Outlook creates the following files and stores them in one of two folders in your Windows user profile. Some of the files are specific to your Outlook profile. So, if you have two profiles, you have two files, each named for a profile. Others files are shared by all of the Outlook profiles used with your Windows logon, including your custom toolbars, `Outcmd.dat` and `VbaProject.OTM`.

The following files contain your Outlook data and customization configurations:

- Personal store (*.PST)—Required to use Outlook, unless you use Exchange Server
- Offline store (*.OST)—Used only with Exchange Server mailboxes
- Offline Address Book (*.OAB)—Present only if using an Exchange server mailbox in offline or cache mode
- Personal Address Book (*.PAB)—Old address book file; not recommended for use with Outlook 2003
- Send and receive settings (*.SRS)—Controls how often Outlook checks for new messages
- Nickname file (*.NK2)—Stores addresses used for AutoComplete
- Navigation Pane settings (*.XML)—Stores customizations to the Navigation Pane
- `Outcmd.dat`—Toolbar customization information
- `Out1Prnt`—Printer settings
- `VbaProject.OTM`—VBA project file
- `Extend.dat`—Information about your installed add-ins

Your email, calendar, and contacts are stored together in one PST if you use POP3 email accounts. If you use HTTP or IMAP email accounts, you have one personal store for each account.

The personal stores used by HTTP and IMAP accounts are for email only. You'll have a second personal store file in your profile to store your contacts, calendar, journal, tasks and notes.



IMAP servers aren't able to support the special forms and folders needed for the special Outlook items—or they couldn't until recently. InsightConnector (www.bynari.net) is an Outlook add-in that copies your Contacts, Calendar, Journal, Tasks, and Notes folders to your IMAP server and synchronizes the folders for you. It works with any IMAP server. You'll still need two personal stores in your profile, but all of your Outlook items will be stored on the IMAP server.

Working with Outlook's Message Store

By default, Outlook stores your PST files at `C:\Documents and Settings\username\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook`. You can and should move your message store to a better location—one that gets backed up regularly and is easier to find.

To move the PST files used with your POP3 accounts, close Outlook, find and move the PST to a new folder, and reopen Outlook. When Outlook complains that it can't find your personal store, browse to the new location and open the PST.

HTTP (Hotmail) and IMAP folders can be moved using this method; however, they sometimes revert to the default location for reasons only Outlook knows. When this happens, Outlook creates a new PST for the account in the default location. Because messages for HTTP and IMAP are offline copies of the contents of your online mailbox, backing up the PST used for these account types is not as important as it is for your default message store.



Outlook uses two hidden folders in your user profile to store data and configuration files. You'll need to select Windows Explorer's **T**ools, **F**older **O**ptions, **V**iew and select the option to show hidden files and folders. When you use Window's Search, you should choose the advanced option to search all hidden files and folders.

Personal folders and address books are stored in `C:\Documents and Settings\username\Local Settings\`, whereas configuration files are in `C:\Documents and Settings\username\Application Data\`.

Outlook uses a new file format, often referred to as *Unicode*, for the message stores so that it can support character sets that aren't supported in the local code page, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic fonts. If you've ever received a message full of question marks, it's because the sender used a character set your installation doesn't support. Using Unicode prevents these types of problems.



Outlook uses Outlook97–2002 PST format for HTTP and IMAP local stores. You are unable to convert it to a Unicode PST.

Unicode format also supports larger file sizes. If you have a large message store, you'll want to use a Unicode format PST. If you also use your personal store with older

versions of Outlook, you'll need to use the ANSI format (which Outlook refers to as the Outlook 97–2002 PST format) because Unicode format won't work with older versions of Outlook.



Although the theoretical limit to a Unicode message store is 33TB, Microsoft has tested it for stability and reliability only up to 20GB. As a result, Microsoft limits the size to 20GB by using a Registry key.

A Unicode PST exports only to another Unicode PST. When you need to use a Unicode PST and want to use your PST with an older version of Outlook, move or copy messages or folders to a new PST that you create using the Outlook 97–2002 PST format. You might lose some data as all instances of Unicode characters are converted to question marks, as shown in the note in Figure 18.1.

FIGURE 18.1

This note was created using the extended characters from a Unicode character set, and at some point the Unicode information was lost from the note.



It's important to understand that even though it's now stored in a Unicode message store, the character data was lost and the text can't be converted back to the original letters. It will always be question marks.



Many of the fonts included with Windows, Office, and other Microsoft programs support Unicode. If you'd like to see what characters are included in a Unicode font, open the Start menu, select the **R**un command, and type **charmap** in the **O**pen field to open Windows' character map. It should open with the Arial font in view. If not, select Arial from the Font list and scroll through the list of characters available in a Unicode font.



Outlook won't export or archive from Unicode format to ANSI format for two reasons:

Lack of Unicode support in older personal stores. You might have messages using the extended characters found in Unicode and aren't aware of it. The unsupported characters are converted to question marks and the message is unreadable.

File size limitations. Your Unicode PST could easily exceed the 2GB file size limitation found in the ANSI PST format.

In both cases, undesirable data loss occurs.

Outlook won't convert your existing personal store to Unicode format. If you need the large file sizes available with Unicode personal stores, you must create a new personal store using Unicode format and move your existing messages and other items to the new personal store. The next two tasks will lead you through the creation of a new set of personal folders, setting it as the default personal store, and moving your existing items to it.

Task: Add a New Personal Store to Your Profile

▼ TASK

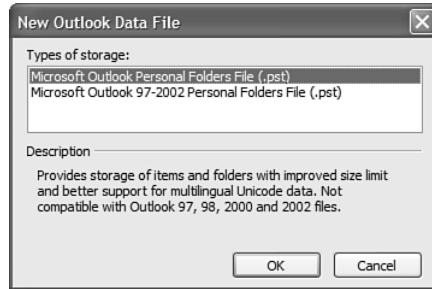
You can have as many personal stores (PST) in your profile as you need. Many people have just one, but I often have several personal stores in my profile. I use one for each of my projects and when the project is complete, I close the personal store to remove it from my profile.

These steps will guide you through adding additional PSTs to your profile:

1. Select **F**ile, **N**ew, Outlook Data **F**ile to open the personal store format dialog and select the personal store format that you want to use (see Figure 18.3). Choose the PST format listed first, Outlook Personal Folders File, unless you need backward compatibility with Outlook 97–2002.
2. After selecting the personal store format you want to use, the Save As explorer opens. Select a different folder if you want to store your personal store in another location and enter a filename for your personal store.

▼ **FIGURE 18.2**

Outlook 2003 supports two PST formats: Unicode, which supports PSTs up to 33 terabytes in size and works with Outlook 2003 only, and ANSI format, which is backward compatible with all versions of Outlook.



I highly recommend storing your personal stores in a subfolder of My Documents so that they are backed up when you back up your other documents. On occasion, Outlook has been known to overwrite personal stores during a reinstall, and when they aren't stored in Outlook's default location, Outlook can't overwrite them.

Using a unique filename for the personal store also prevents Outlook from accidentally overwriting it and you'll also know at a glance which personal store is yours.

3. Next, you'll have the opportunity to enter a display name (see Figure 18.4). Having two folders named Personal Folders is confusing when you open another personal store in your profile, and a unique display name makes it easier to tell which personal store is your current mail folder and which is your old one.

Also, leave Compressible Encryption selected and add a password, if desired. If you choose to enter a password, use one you won't forget.

FIGURE 18.3

When you use a personal store for archiving your older mail, change the name to something more informative than Personal Folders.



- ▲ 4. Once you click OK, Outlook creates your personal store and adds it to your profile.

What Do the Encryption Settings Mean?

Encryption encodes the file to make it unreadable by other programs and after you create the PST, you can't change the encryption setting. Outlook offers three options for encoding the information in your personal store file:

No Encryption—Does not encode the personal store. It might be possible to read the personal store file using a text editor or a hex editor. This is the least secure option.

Compressible Encryption—The personal store can't be read using a text editor or a hex editor. It also encodes the personal store in a format that allows compression if you have a compression program set up on your computer. This is the recommended encryption option.

Best Encryption—The PST can't be read by a text editor or a hex editor, and it encodes the PST in a format that offers the greatest degree of protection. The file can be compressed if you use a compression program, but to a lesser extent than with compressible encryption.

In most situations, the default setting of Compressible Encryption provides sufficient security. Use Best Encryption and a password for your PST if security is very important to you.

That's all there is to it: You've just created a new PST in your profile. You can move or copy messages to it. When you no longer need it, right-click on the top level of the personal store and choose Close *folder name*.

If you want your new mail delivered to the folder, you have to set it as your new default delivery location.

1. Open Tools, E-mail Accounts. Select View or Change Existing Accounts and then click Next.
2. Select the personal folders you just added from the Deliver New E-mail to the Following Folder drop-down list and select Finish.

Outlook warns you the changes you made won't take effect until you close and reopen Outlook. The next time you use Outlook, it'll add the special folders to the new PST and all new messages will be delivered to the new Inbox.



Changing the default delivery location won't affect Hotmail and IMAP accounts. When these accounts are present, the default folders are used for nonmail items. Changing the delivery location applies only to the location used when creating new appointments and other Outlook items.

If you use an Exchange Server account, you should not change their default delivery location unless instructed to do so by your administrator.

If you have an old or archive personal folder that you need to open, use **File, Open, Outlook Data Files** to open an Explorer window. Browse to the folder where you store your Outlook files and select the personal store you want to open. It's added to the folder tree and remains there until you close it.



When you have more than one personal store in your profile, Outlook automatically shows the folders from all the personal stores in the appropriate folder group on your navigation bar.

▼ TASK**Task: Move Contents to a New Unicode PST**

After creating a Unicode PST and setting it as your default delivery location, you'll want to move the contents from older PSTs to the new one. It's especially important to move tasks and appointments because reminders work only in the default folders.

In most cases, it's better to move the folders and Outlook items instead of importing or copying the items.

1. If the old message store is in your profile, close Outlook, locate the PST, and copy it to a new location. This ensures that you have a copy if you ever need to access it using an older version of Outlook. Open Outlook after the old PST file is copied.
2. The default folders (Inbox, Calendar, Tasks, Notes, and Journal) cannot be moved. You'll have to move the folder contents. Select an item in your Inbox folder and use **Ctrl+A** to select all the messages. Then right-click and choose **Move to Folder**. Select the Inbox in the new PST and your messages are moved.
3. Repeat step 2 for each default folder type, choosing **By Categories View** and selecting the correct folder in the new PST.
4. Folders you've created can be moved as a folder and contents in one step. Select the folder, right-click, and choose **Move "[Folder Name]"**. Select the location in

- ▼ the new PST and the folder and contents, including subfolders, are moved to the new PST. When you move folders, custom views and forms in the folder move with the folder. Repeat for each folder.

The reason why you should use Move, not Copy or Import, is because any links to other Outlook items are broken when you copy or import and are retained when you move. This is especially important if you use the journal or link contacts to other items.
- ▲ 5. When you finish moving the items and folders, right-click on the old personal folders and choose Close “[*personal folder name*]”.

Compacting Your Message Store

After using your message store for several weeks or months, it might contain white space, or wasted space, that opens up when you delete messages. The structure of the message store is a database. Emptying the Deleted Items Folder deletes the items from the index, but doesn't remove the actual content. When the message store has at least 20% white space and Outlook is idle, it compacts the message store automatically. If you delete a large number of items or several large attachments, you can compact the store yourself.



Even though emptying the Deleted Items folder removes the items from the index table but leaves the item, the items can't be recovered after they're deleted from the index. Items that are deleted using the Shift and Delete keys bypass the Deleted Items folder and are also not recoverable.

Exchange Servers could have deleted item recovery enabled. If it's enabled, items deleted from the mailbox might be recoverable using the Tools, Recover Deleted Items menu selection.

18

Task: Compact Your Message Store

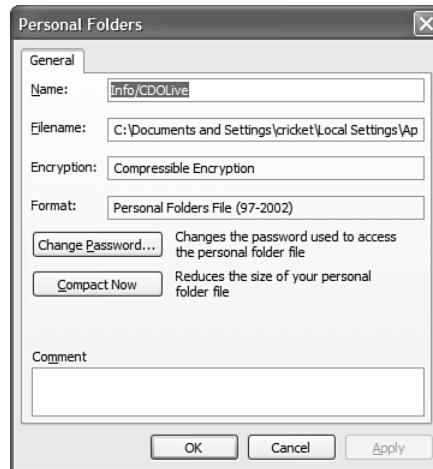
▼ TASK

Both OST and PST stores benefit from compacting. When the message store is large, your PST might have several hundred megabytes of white space before you reach the 20% threshold at which automatic compaction kicks in. After Outlook begins to compact your message store, it can take several minutes for compacting to complete.

To compact your personal store manually:

- ▼ 1. Open the Personal Folders dialog, using Tools, Options, Mail Setup, Data Files.
- ▼ 2. Select the message store you need to compact and then choose the Settings button.

▼ **FIGURE 18.4**
*Compact your PST
 using the Personal
 Folders dialog.*



3. Choose Compact Now. You can set a password on your PST from this dialog or change the display name, but you cannot change the filename from this dialog.

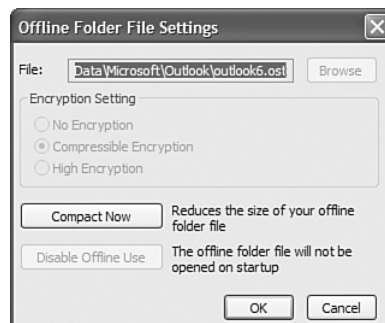
Depending on the size of your PST and the amount of white space in it, it could take several minutes for the compacting process to complete.

Offline folders (OST), for cached Exchange or traditional Offline mode, are compacted from the Advanced tab of the Exchange Account Settings dialog.

1. Right-click on the top level of your Mailbox folder and choose Properties for Outlook Today.
2. Click the Advanced button and then the Advanced tab.
3. Click Offline Folder File Settings and then Compact Now (see Figure 18.5).

If your OST is large, this could take several minutes.

FIGURE 18.5
*Compact your OST
 using the Offline
 Folders File Settings
 dialog.*



Using Exchange Offline

Exchange Server accounts use an offline message store (OST) when they're using Cached Exchange or offline mode. Offline mode typically is used to store a filtered copy of your mailbox, usually on your laptop. You need to choose which mailbox folders you'd like to store in your local copy, and then set filters to limit the size or age of messages that are stored locally when working offline. Your entire mailbox is available to you when you work online, but you have access to only selected folders when you work offline. Offline mode is most often used by employees who travel so that the most important Outlook folders and content is available locally.



Offline availability and filtering options are configured using the Send/Receive dialogs and the folder properties dialog for each folder.

New to Outlook 2003, Cached Exchange mode stores a copy of your mailbox on your computer. Unlike offline mode, which is more appropriate for remote users, Cached Exchange mode was developed to benefit desktop users. When you use Cached Exchange mode and your server goes down, you still have access to your email, calendar, and contacts because all the content in your Exchange mailbox is stored in the offline folders.

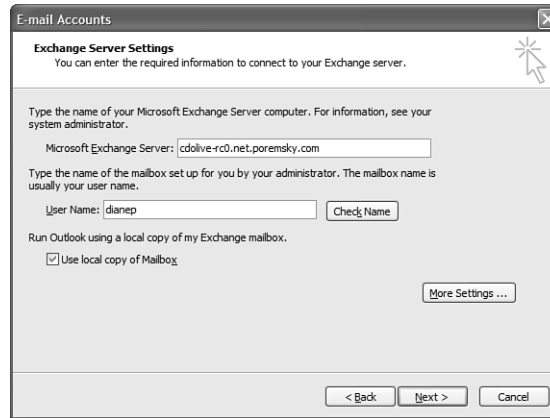
Cached Exchange mode was developed to provide a better user experience by eliminating problems caused by network outages and delays. When Outlook is using the classic online mode, accessing your mailbox is slow when the network is slow. If the network goes offline, you lose access to your mailbox. Using Cached Exchange mode, a copy of your mailbox is cached on your workstation and you continue to have access to your mailbox if the network is down. Cached Exchange mode keeps a local copy of your mailbox, so it reduces the network load because only new items are downloaded when you open outlook.

Cached Exchange mode is enabled by default when you set up your Exchange account in your profile. To verify that you are using Cached Exchange mode or to disable it, choose **T**ools, **E**-mail **A**ccounts, **V**iew or **C**hange Existing E-mail Accounts. Then select your Exchange Server account and choose **C**hange. As shown in Figure 18.6, make sure that the Use Local Copy of Mailbox option is enabled (which it is by default).

Cached Exchange mode downloads a complete copy of your mailbox, and it might take some time for the process to complete when you first connect to your mailbox.

FIGURE 18.6

When you set up an Exchange profile, Use Local Copy of Mailbox is enabled by default. Administrators can choose to disable this with group policy settings.

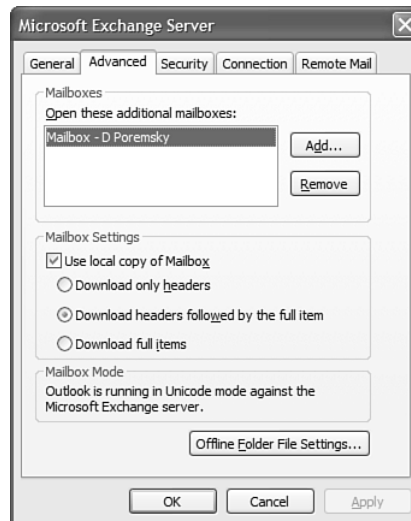


When you use Cached Exchange Mode, you can choose to include public folder favorites in your local cache. When the folders contain large numbers of items, synchronizing with your server can take a long time. However, when you're working remotely, these folders are included when Outlook checks for new messages and they are available to you when Exchange Server is not available.

When public folder favorites aren't cached, you won't have access to the contents when you don't have access to Exchange Server.

FIGURE 18.7

Change your mailbox settings using the Exchange Server Properties dialog. Open the dialog by choosing the More Settings button shown in Figure 18.6.



When Outlook downloads your messages, it does so using one of three modes:

- **Download Only Headers**—Downloads only the headers until you retrieve the message body by opening the message or marking it for download on the next message check.
- **Download Headers Followed by Full Item**— Also known as *drizzle mode*, Download Headers Followed By Full Item downloads all the headers and then message bodies are downloaded. This enables you to see all of your message headers while the message bodies download. This option is available only with Exchange 2003 and works well when your connection to Exchange Server is slow.
- **Download Full Items**—Downloads the complete messages at one time. Unlike the Download Headers Followed by Full Item option, you don't see the message headers until the full message is downloaded. This option works best when you have a fast and reliable connection to Exchange Server.

You can access and choose between these modes by clicking the Connected icon in Outlook's status bar or using **File, Cached Exchange Mode**.



Cached Exchange mode can use the same filtering options as traditional offline use. However, filtering is not recommended for normal usage because you'll have access to all of the items in your mailbox only if you log on to your mailbox using classic Exchange.

Along with the offline store containing your locally cached Exchange items, the global address book is stored locally in several offline address book files (*.oab) at `C:\Documents and Settings\username\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook`.

The offline address book (OAB) stores a copy of Exchange's Global Address Book on the local machine when Outlook is set up for offline usage. This is used for both cached and offline usage. Your send and receive settings control the OAB download. In most cases, you'll want to leave them on the default.

The Personal Address Book (PAB) has been around for years. Now that Contacts folders can store distribution lists, there's little need for PABs. If you have one, you should import it into your Contacts folder.



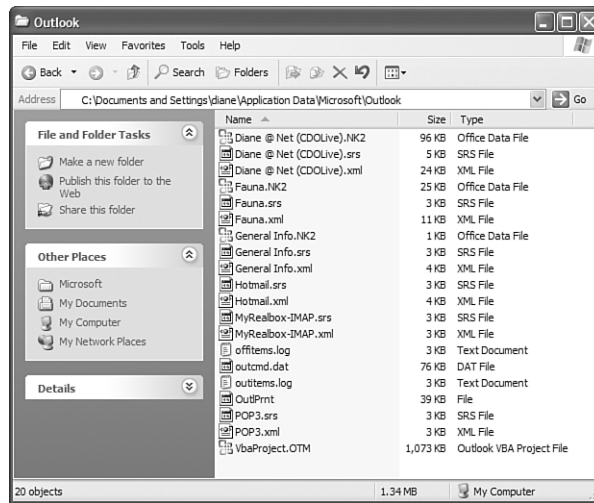
Outlook doesn't use the Windows Address Book (*.WAB)—the address book used by Outlook Express. All Outlook addresses are stored in the PST, OST, or PAB (if you still use one).

Outlook's Customization and Configuration Files

Outlook stores some customization and configuration information in files; other information is stored in the Registry. Outlook stores the configuration files at `C:\Documents and Settings\username\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook` (see Figure 18.8).

FIGURE 18.8

Outlook uses your profile name as the filename for its configuration files. If you move, rename, or delete the files in this folder, Outlook automatically creates new ones the next time you open Outlook using that profile.



Send and Receive Settings (*.SRS)

Send and receive group setting files use the file extension *.SRS. When you customize your send/receive settings in **Tools, Options, Mail Setup tab, Send/Receive** button, (or using **Ctrl+Alt+S**) the changes are saved to the SRS file for your profile. If you have problems viewing the send/receive groups or using the **Tools, Send/Receive** menus, delete or rename this file.



When Outlook leaves messages on an email server, Outlook stores information about the last downloaded message in a hidden message form in your mailbox. Views, rules, and published forms are also stored as hidden messages in your mailbox or personal folders.

If you need to delete any of these items, you should use the Outlook interface. However, you can also use Outlook Spy (www.dimastr.com) to view or delete any of the hidden files. Always back up your personal folders before using tools such as Outlook Spy because items deleted in this manner cannot be recovered.

Hours 3, 14, and 20 provide more information about managing your views, rules, and forms.

Nickname Cache (*.NK2)

The first time you send either a new message or reply email to an address, that address is added to the Nickname cache (*.NK2) file. This file stores the addresses used by AutoComplete to populate the address fields when you begin typing an address. If you have an error in an address in your AutoComplete field, delete it from the cache by using the arrow buttons to select it and then pressing your Delete key. If Outlook crashes when you address new mail, delete or rename the NK2 file for your profile and Outlook will create a new one.

Navigation Pane Settings (*.XML)

The navigation pane on the left of Outlook's window displays your Outlook folders and shortcuts or favorites you've added to it. The configuration for the navigation pane, including Favorite Folders or shortcuts you've added, is stored in an XML file.

You can open the file using Notepad if you want to look at it, but don't edit it unless you know exactly what you're doing. If you have a large number of shortcuts to delete, you can delete this file. You should back up this file on a regular basis.

You can also start Outlook using the `/resetnavpane` switch to clear the *.XML file, reset the navigation bar buttons, and remove shared folders from the folder groups.

To use the switch to clear your navigation bar, open the Run dialog from the Start menu and type `"C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\OFFICE11\OUTLOOK.EXE" /resetnavpane` in the Open: field .

Custom Toolbar Settings (outcmd.dat)

Data for customized toolbars is stored in `outcmd.dat` file. It contains all command bar customization information for changes to the default command bars and custom command bars you've created. This file should be backed up each time you create new command bars or make extensive edits to existing ones.

outcmd.dat occasionally becomes corrupted, which causes Outlook to hang at startup. If this happens, you need to delete outcmd.dat. If you have a back up, you won't lose your custom toolbars.

Printer Settings (Out1Prnt)

Print settings are stored in Out1Prnt. If you receive errors when you attempt to print from Outlook, close Outlook and delete this file. Outlook will rebuild the file the next time you print an Outlook item.

VBA Projects

Macros and VBA projects are stored in vbaProject.OTM. Beginning with Outlook 2003, VBA code contained in your project file is trusted by Outlook's object model and won't trigger security warnings or prompts. When you create your own macros, you should either back up this file or export your code.

Add-in Configuration File (extend.dat)

Information about add-ins installed on your computer is contained in extend.dat. This file shouldn't be backed up. If you uninstall an add-in and restore an old extend.dat, you'll get errors when Outlook starts that it can't find a missing add-in.

If you see an error message that says Outlook can't find an add-in, delete extend.dat or reinstall the add-in.

Occasionally you'll install an add-in that's supposed to add toolbar buttons or menus to Outlook, but they aren't added to the toolbars. Verify that the add-in is installed by looking for the add-in on the add-in list in **T**ools, **O**ptions, **O**ther, **A**dvanced **O**ptions, **C**OM **A**dd-**I**n and **A**dd-**I**n **M**anager buttons. If the add-in is listed and checked, delete extend.dat and restart Outlook.

When you use multiple Outlook profiles, they all use the same Out1Prnt, vbaProject.OTM, and extend.dat, files.

Working with Folders

Outlook stores all of your items in a single message store unless you added additional personal folder stores. To make it easier to manage your messages, you can create additional folders to supplement the default ones created by Outlook. Using the Outlook 97–2002 PST format, there is a limit of approximately 65,000 items and folders per folder, whereas a Unicode format PST can contain an unlimited number of items and folders.

Using some folders to file your messages helps improve message management, but when you have too many folders and subfolders, it's often harder to find your messages. How many is too many? If you have so many that you can't remember some of their names or

where you created them, you probably need to consolidate your folders. You can move some of the folders to a new personal store and reduce the number of subfolders in subfolders.



I like to limit my mailbox to about 20–30 mail folders—one for each project I’m involved in and several for general organizational use. I also try to avoid making subfolders more than two folders deep. It’s too much work to expand a lot of subtrees when I’m looking for a folder.

Soon after a project ends, I move the folders and messages into a personal store for archiving. I name the personal store after the project and store copies of Word documents or other files in the personal store along with all messages, copies of contacts, calendar events, and journal entries.

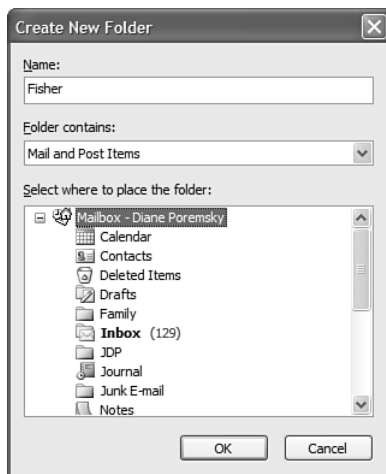
Task: Create New Folders

▼ TASK

Outlook includes one folder of each Outlook item type when you create a mailbox PST. Although you can use just one folder for your mail, most people like to add additional folders and create a filing system for their messages and other Outlook items. When you add a second PST, Outlook includes just the Deleted Items folder and you need to add folders to it. Don’t move items to the top level of a new PST—add folders and create a file system.

1. Right-click on any folder and choose New Folder to add an additional folder (see Figure 18.9). By default, new folders are added to the folder you right-clicked on to select New Folder, but you can select a location from the Create New Folder dialog or you can move the folder at any time.

FIGURE 18.9
Use the Create New Folder dialog to add new folders to your message store.



- ▼ 2. Choose a folder type for your folder from the Folder Contains menu. You can choose from any of the Outlook folder types: Calendar, Contacts, Mail and Post, Journal, Tasks, or Notes.
 - 3. Choose a location for your folder. If you don't select a folder, your new folder is added as a subfolder in the folder you last selected. Any folder type can be a subfolder of any other folder type. For example, I often add a tasks folder as a subfolder of a project folder.
 - 4. Click OK to add your new folder your message store, and right-click and choose Add to Favorite Folders if you'd like.
- ▲

You can add as many folders as you want to your message stores, although too many folders—especially when you use a lot of subfolders—often makes it harder to find your messages.

Task: Moving Messages and Folders

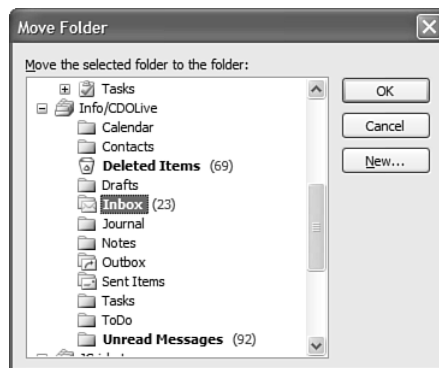
▼ TASK

When you need to move or copy the contents of a folder between message stores, move or copy the entire folder:

1. Select the folder you want to move.
2. Right-click and choose Move *folder name*, where *folder name* is the name of the selected folder.
3. Select the new folder or personal store from the Move Folder list (see Figure 18.10). If you need to create a new folder, click the New button.

FIGURE 18.10

The Move Folder and Copy Folder list enable you pick a folder or message store to move or copy folders to. You can also drag and drop folders to move them or press Ctrl and drag to copy. When you right-click and drag, you have the option to Move or Copy your folders.



Summary

This hour introduced you to the new Unicode message store format, which provides support for many of the character sets used worldwide. A side benefit of Unicode is the ability to store more items in your personal folders than the ANSI format used by older versions of Outlook. Because the Unicode format doesn't have a file size limitation, you won't have to worry about losing data if you let your personal folders get too large. You also learned how to set up a personal folder and move your folders between personal folders.

In addition, this hour explained what the different files Outlook stores on your hard drive are used for and which ones should be backed up. It also included some troubleshooting tips to try when Outlook misbehaves.

Q&A

Q Should I use a Unicode message store?

A If you're new to Outlook, you should use Unicode format. It's the future. When you upgrade from earlier versions of Outlook, the answer depends on your email habits.

Do you correspond with people from other countries? Do their messages often have question marks where text should be?

If you answer either question with yes, you'll benefit from using Unicode format.

Is your personal store more than 1GB or close to 2GB? Do you archive or delete attachments from messages to keep your mailbox from reaching 2GB?

If you answer yes to either of these questions, you should use Unicode format.

Do you use your personal store with older versions of Outlook?

If you answer no, you should use Unicode format. Backward compatibility is the only reason not to use Unicode. By the same token, if you answered yes only to this question, stick with the Outlook97–2002 format. You can use file management techniques such as archiving to keep your personal store small.

If you answered yes to all three sets of questions, you should use Unicode and copy items to an Outlook97–2002 format personal store or upgrade to Outlook 2003 on all of your systems. The benefits of using Unicode for foreign character support and large message store outweigh compatibility issues. You can always copy most items to an older format personal store if you need to. However, items that use Unicode characters won't be readable when copied to an Outlook97–2002 PST.