

Question: How do I set-up an autoresponder in Outlook 2000?

Answer: Setting up an auto-responder in Outlook 2000 is pretty straightforward.

One note of caution before you start. You'll need to leave your computer on and Outlook running to get the autoresponder to work.

Your computer will also need to be connected to the Internet at all times while you are away. If you have an always-on high speed service that uses a cable or DSL (digital subscriber line) modem then that's not a problem.

At work your computer may also be connected to a network that is always connected to the Internet.

However, if you have to dial up to the Internet over a phone line then using an autoresponder as outlined below is not recommended.

On to the instructions.

First create the text of the e-mail that will be sent out automatically. Create a new e-mail in Outlook 2000 by clicking on the "File" menu and then selecting "New" and then "Mail Messages".

A new e-mail window will open. Type in the response that will go out automatically to people who send you e-mail.

Don't fill in any of the "To" or "CC" fields, but do type in a subject, like "Andy Walker is out of the office".

When finished, click the "File" menu at the top of that box and choose "Save As". If it is not listed, click the double arrows at the bottom of the menu to expose all menu options.

Next you'll want to save the autoresponse file to your hard drive. Let's call it "outoffice" and place it in a folder called "email-files" on your main hard drive.

In the Save As dialog box, create a folder called "email-files" to keep the auto-responder e-mail file in. Click on the pulldown box at the top of the dialog box and choose the "C:" drive. Then click on the "create new folder" icon (which looks like a file folder with a star exploding on its edge) at the top of the dialog box. A highlighted folder named "New Folder" will appear. Rename it to "email-files" and hit your "Enter" key. Then double click on the newly created folder to go into it.

Make sure it says "outoffice" in the "File name" field. In the "Save as file type" field click the pulldown box (down arrow to the right of the field) and choose "Outlook Template (*.oft)". Click the Save button. Your autoresponder file, named "outoffice.oft" is now ready to go.

In the main Outlook window, choose the "Tools" menu and then the "Rules Wizard". Click the "New" button. A box will appear. Make sure the "Check messages when they arrive" item is selected in the "Which type of rule do you want to create" box at the top. Click "Next".

In the next screen you need to select the e-mails that the autoresponder will respond to. There are lots of choices (be sure to use the slider on the right to explore all the options). To be safe, choose "Where my name is in the To box". If you want to alert people who carbon copy (i.e. CC) you on e-mail, then check the "where my name is in the Cc box" as well. Click "Next".

In next dialog box you'll choose what to do when an e-mail arrives. Scroll down using the slider at the right of the dialog box and find the item that says "Reply using a specific template".

You'll notice that each part of the rule you are creating appears in the "Rule description" box.

When "Reply using a specific template" appears in the rule description, note that "specific template" is underlined. That means it's clickable, and therefore customizable. So click it. A dialog box with the title "Select a Reply Template". This is where you link to the autoresponder e-mail that you created earlier.

In the "Look In" pulldown menu at the top select the second item called "User templates in file system". When you do this you'll notice that the "Browse" button to the right that was previously greyed out is now active. So click it. A "Go to Folder" box will pop up. Now click the plus sign (+) next to "My Computer". A list of drives on your computer will appear. Click the plus (+) sign next to the "C:" drive. It'll look something like this "Andy's computer (C:)". A list of folders on your "C:" drive will appear. Select the "email-files" folder you created earlier and click OK.

The "outofoffice" template we created earlier will be listed in the "email-files" folder. Select it and click open.

Now you'll be back to the "Rules Wizard" box. In the "Rules Description" you'll notice that it says on the bottom line "reply using C:\email-files\outofoffice.oft".

Click "Next". You'll have the option to create any exceptions. Unless there's some e-mail that you don't want the autoresponder to go to simply click "Next" again. If you do check off the exceptions as appropriate.

On the next screen, name the rule in the top box. Call it "Out of the Office", if you like. Also make sure there's a check mark in the box that says: "Turn on this rule". This will activate the rule immediately. You can leave the box next to "Run this rule now on messages already in the Inbox" unchecked, unless you want all the messages you have already received to be sent your "out of the office" autoresponder.

Click "Finish". The autoresponder is now set up. It will be listed in the "Apply rules in the following order" box. To modify it select the rule so that it is highlighted and click "Modify" on the right. To remove it click "Delete".

If the box next to the rule is checked it is active, so don't turn it on unless you are ready to leave the office.

To get to the rule later, start up Outlook 2000, choose the "Tools" menu and select "Rules Wizard".