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Procmail: forward, sort, save, delete pine e-mail messages

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Procmail is a tool that allows **pine users** to control delivery of their e-mail messages.

Procmail is tricky to set up and is not recommended for students or GroupWise users. See Student e-mail forwarding and Employee e-mail forwarding for full details.

Incoming mail is screened according to criteria you specify, such as who it's from or what the subject line contains. Messages that match your criteria are then processed: filed to a certain folder, forwarded to a different address, deleted, etc. Procmail is flexible and reliable, but a bit tricky to set up. Mallard currently uses procmail version3.11pre7.

How to set an employee inbox on Mallard (pine or IMP) to forward all messages to a different destination address

1. Open a Web browser to this page (www.auburn.edu/email/forward.html).

2. Open a telnet session. If you're using an OIT lab computer, do this by double-clicking "Secure Shell to Mallard" on the desktop. Now you have two open windows. You can make them smaller so that they're side by side, or you can change from one to the other using Alt-Tab.

3. Login to Mallard (hostname is mallard.auburn.edu) in the telnet window.

4. Type this command and press the Enter key:

```
mv .forward .forward.bak
```

A .forward file (needed in the past) is unnecessary. If you have a .forward file, this renames and disables it. If you didn't have a .forward file, you'll see a message like this, which is expected:

```
 mv: cannot access .forward
```

5. In the browser window, highlight the lines below and press Ctrl-Insert to copy them.

```
PATH=/opt/bin:/usr/local/bin

#Turn on during setup and testing
#Turn off after debugging
VERBOSE=on

#Pine mail directory
MAILDIR=$HOME/mail

LOGFILE=$MAILDIR/proclog
```

6. Switch to the other window, type this command and press the Enter key.

```
    pico .procmailrc
```

This opens the pico editor to create a file called .procmailrc. Note that the first character of the filename is a dot (period). The file **must** have this exact name.

7. Press Shift-Insert to paste the lines into the file.

8. Add two lines similar to these (that's the number zero, not the letter o) :

   1. `:0 c`   (if you want a copy of each message saved in your Inbox) or
      `:0`   (if you don't want to save a copy)

   2. `!username@domain.edu`   (where username@domain.edu is the forwarding destination address; the exclamation point is the command to forward)

9. Press Ctrl-X to exit the pico editor.
10. Answer Y to "Save modified buffer....?"
11. When "File Name to write: .procmailrc" appears, press the Enter key.
12. Send yourself a message to be sure it is delivered where you intend!
13. Close the telnet window.

Advanced uses of procmail - Warning: use at your own risk

Incoming e-mail messages can be deleted by procmail. The instructions below are for **advanced** users only. You'll want to test and debug every recipe before using it.

1. Remove or rename the .forward file and the .procmailrc file, if they already exist.
2. Create a file named .procmailrc that contains these lines:

```
PATH=/opt/bin:/usr/local/bin

    #Turn on during setup and testing
    #Turn on whenever testing a new rule
    #Turn off after debugging because the log file can get very large
    VERBOSE=on

    #Pine mail directory
    MAILDIR=$HOME/mail

    #Directory for storing procmail log and rc files
    PMDIR=$HOME/.procmail

    LOGFILE=$PMDIR/log
    INCLUDERC=$PMDIR/rc.testing
    INCLUDERC=$PMDIR/rc.recipes
```

Lines preceded by the pound sign (#) are comments.

3. Create a directory for your procmail log and rc (run commands) files (this was set in the PMDIR= line in the .procmailrc file).

```
cd
mkdir .procmail
```

4. Create an rc (run commands) file for testing:

```
cd .procmail
pico rc.testing
```

5. Put these lines in your .procmail/rc.testing file:

```
:0:
* ^Subject:.*test
Procmail-tests
```

Notes:
   o The first line contains a zero (0), not the letter O.
   o The second colon means use a lock when updating the folder that you are filing the matching mail in. This is important when you are getting a lot of matching mail filed into the same folder.
   o There is a space between the asterisk and the ^ on the second line.

6. Go into pine and create a folder called *Procmail-tests*. Then send yourself two test messages: one with `test' in the subject and one without `test' in the subject. Check that the messages were delivered correctly. The one with `test' in the subject should be in the folder *Procmail-tests*, and the one without `test' in the subject should be in your *Inbox*. If these were not delivered correctly, see the Troubleshooting section below.

7. Create recipes to do exactly what you want. **Be sure to test them one at a time.** Tailor the examples below to suit your needs.

8. Create a file in the .procmail directory called rc.recipes for filtering incoming messages.

```
        cd
        cd .procmail
        pico rc.recipes
```

9. After testing a recipe, add it to the rc.recipes using cut and paste. (Don't trust yourself not to make a typo!)

10. Repeat the testing process until you have everything working as you want it to.

11. Turn the extra messages in the logfile off and comment out the rc.testing line in the .procmailrc file:

```
    VERBOSE=OFF

    # INCLUDERC=$PMDIR/rc.testing
```

Example Procmail Recipes

Example 0: Delete all messages containing a particular phrase
This is useful to get rid of SPAM that keeps coming in with different addresses or subject lines but always contains some key offensive phrase. Be very sure that the phrase would never be in a message you might want to keep!! For example, the phrase might be a url of a porn site.

```
:0 B
* www.pornsite.org
/dev/null
```

Example 1: Sort mail from a particular address into a specified folder

```
    # Everything after the pound sign on a line is a comment
    # Sort mail from your mother into a pine folder called Mom
    :0: # the first colon : means begin a recipe
    * ^FROM.*name@address
    Mom
```

Example 2: Sort mail to a particular address into a specified folder

```
    # Sort mail from the "hts-users" mailing list into the
    # pine folder called Miva.
    :0: # the second colon means use a lock file
    * ^TOhts-users # ^TO means look in the To: and Cc: and Bc:
                    # fields of the message for a match.
                    # hts-users means match any message
                    # containing the phrase "hts-users"
                    # in the field
    Miva
```

Example 3: Delete mail from an objectionable sender
Suppose you do not want to read or even know about incoming mail from a known undesirable source. Incoming messages from the sender will never appear in your INBOX. Replace "badguy@harass.net" with the actual address of the undesired sender. If you have more than one recipe, put this first.

```
:0
*^FROM.*badguy@harass.net
/dev/null
```

Beware - having messages automatically deleted is risky! Verify that the recipe works properly before adding the /dev/null action to the recipe (i.e., make sure only the mail you really want to delete is being matched). It would be safer to just file all junk mail in a folder and then delete the folder periodically. Then if you ever think you are missing mail, you can review the contents of this folder to see if it matched a rule and got filed away as junk.

Example 4: Sort & file incoming mail for an organization

Suppose you are elected to be secretary of the Joggers Club. You've added a pine mail folder called Joggers, and had an alias set up so that messages mailed to joggers@auburn.edu are delivered to you. Now you want to have all the incoming mail that's addressed to joggers@auburn.edu to be filed not in your INBOX but in your Joggers folder.

```
:0
* ^TOjoggers@auburn.edu
# asterisk * means begin a condition
Joggers
```

Now suppose the president of Joggers wants to get a copy as well. The recipe above needs to make another copy and additionally forward it on to the president. (Say the president's e-mail address is irun@auburn.edu.) You can put comments in the .procmailrc file; anything following # is ignored. You edit your .procmailrc file to look like this:

```
:0 c # c means copy
* ^TOjoggers@auburn.edu
Joggers

:0 a # a means additional
!irun@auburn.edu
```

Example 5: Refuse mail from objectionable sender

Create a file named **refusal** in your mail directory that contains the message you want bounced back to the sender.

```
Subject: Delivery refused

At the request of the addressee, mail from this
address is not being delivered.
```

Use this recipe, changing badguy@harass.net to the actual e-mail address:

```
:0
*^FROM.*badguy@harass.net
    | /bin/mail badguy@harass.net < refusal

:0 a
    /dev/null
```

You will never even see the incoming messages from badguy@harass.net.

Beware - having messages automatically deleted is risky! Verify that the recipe works properly before adding the /dev/null action to the recipe (i.e., make sure only the mail you really want to delete is being matched). It would be safer to just file all junk mail in a folder and then delete the folder periodically. Then if you ever think you are missing mail, you can review the contents of this folder to see if it matched a rule and got filed away as junk.

Example 6:

Suppose you are a professor who teaches two classes, BY100 and BY351 , and you want your students to communicate with you via e-mail. You've set up two mail aliases, and instructed your students to send their assignments accordingly to one of these addresses: BY100@auburn.edu or BY351@auburn.edu. You have added several pine folders named BY100A, BY100B, BY351A, and so on, to correspond with assignments A, B, etc. in each course. You have instructed your students to put "Assignment A", "Assignment B", etc. on the subject line of the e-mail they send to you. You edit your rc.recipes file to include these recipes:

```
:0
    * ^ToBY100
    * ^Subject:.*Assignment A
      BY100A

:0
    * ^ToBY100
    * ^Subject:.*Assignment B
      BY100B

:0
    * ^ToBY351
    * ^Subject:.*Assignment A
      BY351A

:0
    * ^ToBY351
    * ^Subject:.*Assignment B
      BY351B
```

Now all the incoming assignments from the two classes will be sorted automatically into the correct folder based on the content of the To and Subject fields.

Example 6: Call the Hypermail program to create a Web archive of every message sent to a mailing list. Complete instructions.

Troubleshooting

- Look at your $LOGFILE (.procmail/log) to see if you can determine what the problem is.

- Check these files for typos:

.forward
.procmailrc
.procmail/rc.testing
.procmail/rc.recipes

- Begin a recipe with zero, not the letter O.
- Do not put a space between the caret (^) and the word TO in ^TO.

- Do not put a space between the ^TO and the text that you are matching on; it must be ^TOtext.

- Both letters in TO must be capitalized.

Getting Help with Procmail

You may read the online documentation by typing

```
man procmail
```

at the Sun/UNIX (Mallard) command prompt. Press the space bar to continue from page to page.
There is a procmail newsgroup named comp.mail.misc.

You may submit questions/answers to the procmail-related mailing list at:
procmail@informatik.rwth-aachen.de

Send subscription and information requests for this list to:
procmail-request@informatik.rwth-aachen.de

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