

Free Stuff: Email

By Richard Lowe

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Richard Lowe
articles@internet-tips.net

Internet Tips And Secrets <http://www.internet-tips.net>

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Author: Richard Lowe, Jr.

Contact Author: <mailto:articles@internet-tips.net>

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(Autoresponder formatted for 65 character wrapping)

Free email services are in abundance all over the web. There are literally hundreds (if not thousands) of different services to help you with your messages. Why do companies provide these services? Because they can sell advertising space, and they have several ways to do it.

- They can append a small ad to each email message which is sent or received
- They can display banners
- Their sites can issue popup windows with advertisements

Why would you want to use a free email service? Probably the most important reason is simply to help you with spam. You can use a web based free email account to receive messages from signups to various services. Then, you can access the account only when necessary for the service. This way, any spam messages will be directed to the free mailbox, which you do not use very often if at all.

Another great reason to use these services is to be able to pick up your email from your browser. This is great for when you are traveling or on those occasions when you want to read your home email when at work (see "Is surfing the internet safe at work?")

Each of the four basic types of email services are described below, along with some examples of some of the free services that are available.

Web Based Email - These services allow you to retrieve, send and manage your email from your browser. In general, the services are advertising (banner) supported, although most offer an ad free paid version of some kind.

Hotmail.Com

<http://www.hotmail.com>

The first and oldest web-based email system. Good interface, reliable and reasonably fast.

Mail.Com

<http://www.mail.com/mailcom/login.jhtml>

Probably the best free web-based email service available. Choose from dozens of different email domains. Very easy to use and flexible. Premium service is available at a low cost.

Startrekmail

<http://www.startrekmail.com/member/login.page>

Create your own Star Trek email address. Choose from many domains, including:

- @StarTrek.com
- @USSEnterprise.com
- @Klingons.com
- @HesDeadJim.com
- @ToBoldlyGo.com
- @DeepSpaceNine.com

Yahoo Mail

<http://mail.yahoo.com/>

Another popular, nice email system. Lots of features, very reliable and fast.

POP Email Services - POP email is virtually always supplied as part of the services you receive from your web host and ISP. Your messages are stored on a server, and you use your email client (Outlook, Outlook Express or Eudora, for example) to send, receive and manage your messages.

E-OmniNet

<http://eo.yifan.net/>

E-Omnet provides online services of all kinds with a single account. It includes the file manager, address book, bookmarks, solar and lunar calendars plus event reminder, free POP3 email and web hosting.

Mail Options

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

Provides mail and news access in a web based browser. Mail is stored on a POP server.

RunBox

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

Runbox Mail Manager is a server-based email application that enables you to store all your email online. They provide 100 MB of storage space, extensive management features, and the ability to access email on any device.

Web-based POP Email Services - These services allow you to receive your POP email using your browser. Some of them will read from your own supplied POP email account (such as your ISP account) and others have their own POP servers.

Email Planet

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

Allows you to manage your email from your browser.

FetchMail

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

Let's you read your POP email using your browser.

Mail2Web

<http://www.mail2web.com/>

Will read POP mail from any POP server using your browser. Looks like a nice service.

MailAndNews

<http://mailandnews.com/>

Another web based service allowing you to access your email. In addition, this company lets you read newsgroups.

Email Forwarding Services - These services will forward your email from an existing email account to another account.

Bigfoot

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

This service will forward email from your email account to another email address. This is very useful when you are on vacation. Also has the ability to distribute and filter messages. A premium (paid) service is available with more options.

HotPop

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

HotPop provides a full featured email client, with POP capabilities and email forwarding.

Return Receipt Services - Sometimes you just have to know that an email was received by someone. The problem is that support for return receipts is dependent upon the email client, and can be turned off entirely by the user! These services get around that problem.

ReturnReceipt

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

ReturnReceipt is a web-based email system that notifies you when your email has been received and read. It functions much like the U.S. Postal System's certified mail, with senders receiving an electronically "postmarked" receipt documenting the exact time and date an email was read. Use it for all your important email and anytime you need proof your email was read.

Miscellaneous email services - Some services that are useful but do not fit into the above categories.

OneHopMail

http://www.bluefingers.com/ohmhtml/ohm_send.html

This service is very cool. Let's say you are on the road and need to send an email message. You want it to appear as if you sent it from your home email but cannot access (or don't want to for some reason) your email account. Use HopMail to enter your email address and a message. The service will send a test message to your email account. If the message makes it okay, it will send your message on it's way, as if it came from you.

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