



# Beginners: Introduction to email

## What is email?

- Email, or electronic mail, is similar to the postal system: the sender sends messages and documents to the recipient's address; but with email, instead of putting a letter in a post-box, the message is sent electronically from one computer to another via the Internet using a telephone line.
- You can send email to anyone that has access to the Internet and an email account.

## Advantages of Using e-mail

- It's **quick**. An email normally reaches its destination within seconds! The conventional postal service is known as **snail mail!**
- It's **cheap**. Email services are normally free; you only pay for your Internet connection which, depending on the service you use, can be free (for example, using any Internet PC at any Hillingdon Library), or cost as little as 1p a minute even if you are sending a message to the other side of the world.
- It's **convenient**.
  - ◆ Email messages can be sent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to any country in the world.
  - ◆ One message can have multiple recipients.
  - ◆ You can send documents and pictures as attachments with your messages.
- It's easy to keep a track of what you have sent and received.
  - ◆ Your email box can easily keep a copy of everything sent and received, neatly organised into folders.
  - ◆ You can easily get confirmation that your mail has been read.



## Disadvantages of Using e-mail

- Email can **lack privacy**. An email message can be easily sent (both accidentally or deliberately) to multiple recipients and forwarded (re-sent) to more recipients without the original's author's knowledge - so never send any personal or sensitive data by email, you never know where it might end up!
- You will receive **spam** and it might contain inappropriate or **offensive** material. Email is an important business tool for companies and you will inevitably be targeted. To minimise the amount of junk mail you receive, whenever you register with a company or web site, make sure not to give them permission to pass your details on to third parties or to send you a regular newsletter. Use different email accounts for different purposes.
- Email is used to propagate **computer viruses** via infected attachments. Always use up-to-date antivirus software and scan attachments before opening them.

## How Can I Get an e-mail Account?

- Usually the **Internet Service Provider (ISP)** you pay to connect your PC to the Internet will offer you several free email accounts as part of their services. Normally they are set up to be used in conjunction with Outlook Express; all emails are downloaded to your own PC and deleted from the ISP's server (POP mail). Hence the email account is only accessible from your home PC.
- You can open an account with a **Web-based** email provider. All emails are stored on their server, which means that you will be able to access your account from any PC with Internet access. Many Web based accounts are free, as their Web interface tends to contain advertising banners and pop-ups.  
**www.myway.com** offer a free Web-based service which is easy to use and completely free from advertising materials.