

A Touch of Communication

MIND BOGGLER

Do you know how? (Please tick appropriate boxes)

- ☐ To switch on/off the computer correctly.
- ☐ To operate the keyboard and mouse correctly.
- ☐ To type characters into computer correctly.
- ☐ To change the background picture of computer.
- ☐ To create a new folder to keep my files in the computer.
- ☐ To surf on the Internet.

After doing this exercise, the instructor would know the individual ICT background of the learners. Then start the lesson by sharing experiences about how valuable it is to know how to operate a computer. Relate it especially to e-mail.



Sometimes we hear the news mentioning “surfing the net” or perhaps teenagers are saying to their friends, “send mail to me”, “MSN with me” and “pass the website url to me”.

What do all these statements actually mean?

In what way may we mail a letter to friends and can have it received in a second?

We may use the Internet to mail a letter and have it delivered in a very short time. The objective of this topic is to show that the Internet is a fast way to mail a letter, and we will quickly experience and understand the pleasure of using the Internet to communicate with anyone from all over the world.

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Define e-mail and its advantages; and
2. Explain how to communicate via Internet by using available communication tools and softwares.

INTRODUCTION

The applications of computer in communication are highly related to the technology of 3C's, namely:

- (a) Computer;
- (b) Communication; and
- (c) Consumer Electronics.

It is also highly relevant to daily lives, such as exchanging information with others and passing the information to others. Figure 1.1 shows some of the products that relate to communication applications:



e-Commerce Website



Digital Video-On-Demand (VOD)



Mobile Communication Device



Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
(The Internet Phone)

Figure 1.1: Examples of communication applications

Among these applications, “e-mail” is one of the most commonly used services. The email server serves as the “post-office” on the Internet which substitutes for the traditional post office in the real world. The email account we use is similar to the address or mail box in the post office. You need to apply for a user’s account before using the e-mailing system.

Compared to the traditional mail, e-mail possesses the following characteristics:

- (a) Simple;
- (b) Fast; and
- (c) Money-saving.

But the drawback of an e-mail is that it can not carry real goods, for example, packages, flowers, and etc.

In short, communicating via e-mail is the most convenient way especially with regards to time and ease of use. Also, this should not be a problem as nowadays, the ISPs (Internet Service Providers) are located everywhere; you will not miss any important message while you are out of town or traveling abroad.

By using an e-mail, it is sort of like another channel of communication, for sometimes, it is easier to express your emotions or discuss anything rather you do it in person.

WHAT IS AN E-MAIL ?

E-mail (electronic mail) is a mail service through the Internet. In the real world, we send and receive mails via post office and we call it a “**traditional mail or snail mail**”. On the Internet, we use the web services to send and receive mail and we call it “e-mail”.

Figure 1.2 shows the traditional steps in writing a letter.

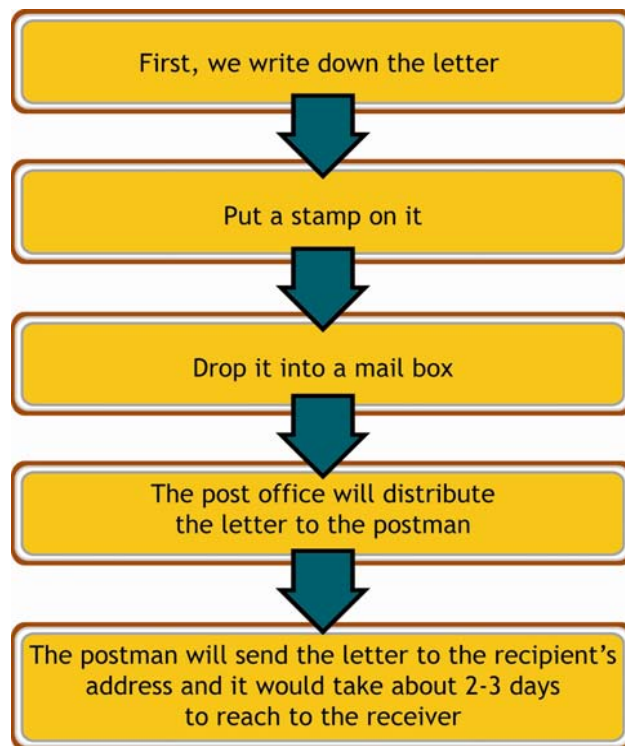


Figure 1.2: Steps in writing a letter

- While the sequence of writing an e-mail is much faster than writing a letter. Figure 1.3 shows the step in writing an e-mail.



Figure 1.3: Steps in writing an e-mail

1.1.1 The Advantages of E-mail

The advantages of e-mail are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: The Advantages of E-mail

The Advantages of E-mail	
(a) Super fast	Even if you and the sender are worlds apart, the message will reach the recipient in a matter of seconds, while traditional mail takes about a couple of weeks (sometimes).
(b) Low cost	There will be no extra charges besides local calls and transmission fees. Also, it is not necessary to buy paper, envelopes and stamps as messages are sent via the net.
(c) Easy access	All you need is a computer and an Internet connection.
(d) Unlimited time	You are able to e-mail, anytime at your convenience, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as long as there is an Internet service provided.
(e) Environmental conservation	Less paper will be used so fewer trees will be cut.
(f) Content	You can also send an e-mail that contains voice message, photos, image files and songs. You also can save and re-use the same content for future need. Besides that, you can send the same message to many people at a time where you may notify a bunch of friends about meetings, parties and such at once.

1.1.2 The Format of E-mail

The format of e-mail address is different from a website address. It comprises of the account of sender and receiver and the domain name of the mail servers, e.g.:

dreamer6@mail.seed.net.tw

The Receiver The Address

The meaning of the address is this: the server is called("mail"), the company is called("seed") and the ISP(Internet Service Providers) is ("net") in Taiwan ("tw"), the owner of the mail box is "dreamer6", @ means "at". The entire email address must be 100% correct so the mail can be delivered correctly to the desired place and person.



Figure 1.4: The format of e-mail

1.1.3 Things to be Aware of

(a) Junk Mail

Due to the convenience, low cost of email and no strict identification required, it is very common that e-mails are abused. This being said, some companies will make use of e-mails for commercial value. Consequently, email users find it very troublesome because they have to go through lots of e-mails at a time to filter the unnecessary ones. It is a waste of time and the bandwidth of the Internet.



(b) Virus Mail

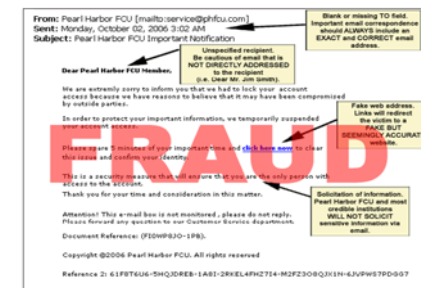
Some programs may even contain virus which may spread over to other e-mails. Sometimes you open an e-mail from a familiar sender and find out it has a virus in it which will harm your computer. Be careful especially when there is an attachment in the e-mail.

- The harmful e-mail has file extensions such as .com, .exe, .cmd, .bat. These names imply that they are execution files and could be harmful mails.



(c) Phishing (Fraud Mail)

Some mails are from banks or famous portal sites which are actually impostors, acting as if they send you a confirmation letter or asking for your personal details and request you to click on a website link. This may lead to a fake address of a website where your ID and password will be stolen. Beware, as you may lose a huge amount of money or put your life at risk as your identity is recorded by these irresponsible people.



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OTHER COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND SOFTWARES

1.2.1 MSN Messenger

MSN is a popular Instant Messaging program created by the MicroSoft Network which enables the users to communicate with other users (Figure 1.5).

As long as you applied for a valid ID and password, you may chat with your friends. You just have to type out a message and the recipient will respond to you instantly. It is as if you are having a conversation with the other party in person. Users are able to send songs or share any files too.



Figure 1.5: MSN Messenger

1.2.2 Online Games

Online games are games that you can play alone or with your friends via the Internet. Usually, they are in forms of role-playing characters, strategic games or just mere fighting games. People can save their records and accumulate credits for continuous playing. Figure 1.6 shows an example of games available in Yahoo.com.



Figure 1.6: Online Games

1.2.3 FTP (File Transfer Protocol)

FTP is a way of exchanging files on the Internet. It can connect to different computer systems. When you see a website starts with "ftp://", it means that you can transfer files. If you would like to exchange files or data via FTP you will need to follow the procedures given. Figure 1.7 shows the example of FTP.

Mostly, users use FTP to download MP3 music, games or upload web pages. When we download files, it simply means we use the Internet to transfer the file from one computer to another. The address of FTP is similar to a website except it begins with "ftp://" while ordinary website begins with "http://" e.g.:

- <http://www.mcps.edu.tw>
- <ftp://ms1.mcps.edu.tw>

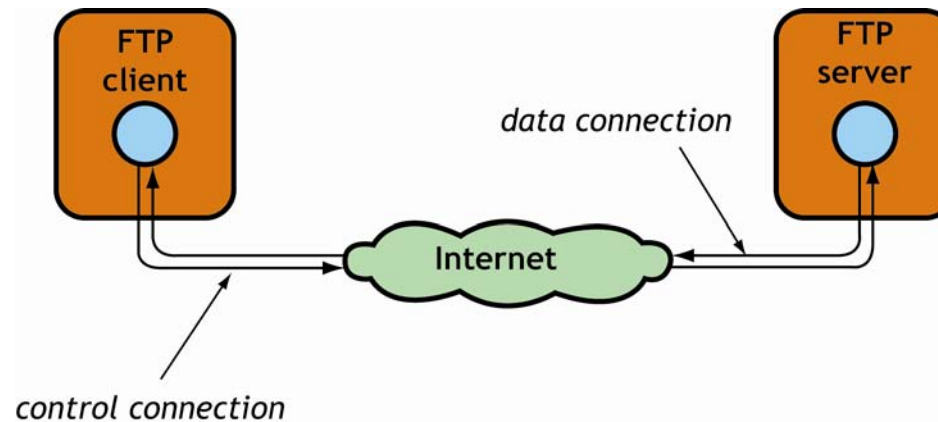


Figure 1.7: FTP (File Transfer Protocol)

If you have some music, movies, photos, games or novels in your computer that you would like to share with friends, you may send it to FTP server and set up an ID/password. Once your friend has this ID/password, he may enter the FTP server to download those files.



ACTIVITY 1.1

1. Apply for a free e-mail account from any major portal site, e.g.:
 - www.hotmail.com
 - www.google.com
 - www.yahoo.com
2. Make sure yourself (Anna) and your friend (Debbie) each possesses a valid e-mail account.

Anna is going to invite Debbie to come for a party. Please send an email from Anna to Debbie by in putting the following content:

Sender: Anna
Receiver: Debbie
Subject: Gathering notice

Content of mail

Dear Debbie,
Will meet you coming Sunday at community center.
Be sure to come!

Love,
Anna

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT SO FAR?

At the end of this lesson, you have learnt:

- E-mail is a mail service through the Internet;
- There are five advantages of e-mail such as its super fast, cheap, easily accessible, forever there, environmental friendly and the content can contain voice messages, photos, etc; and
- We can communicate via Internet by using MSN messenger, online games and exchanging files using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).



SIGNIFICANT WORDS

Word	Definition
E-mail address	A string of characters to identify a user, so that the user is able to receive Internet mails.
Forward mail	Send a received letter to a new receiver by email and the content may remain unchanged or modified.

Video-on-Demand (VOD)	Select video or other multi-media data by user's preference and need.
Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)	VoIP services convert the voice into a digital signal that travels over the Internet. It is a technology that allows you to make voice calls using a broadband Internet connection instead of a regular (or analog) phone line. Internet phone gateway can be used to connect traditional phone set to Internet and connecting two distanced phone systems to make phone call via Internet.
Internet Service Provider (ISP)	A company or an organization to provide connection to the Internet for users, with a great amount of investment in equipments and communications facilities and steadily build up a bandwidth and allocate it to end-users by charging fees.
MP3	<p>MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3, more commonly referred to as MP3, is a digital audio encoding format using a form of loss data compression.</p> <p>It is a common audio format for consumer audio storage, as well as a de facto standard encoding for the transfer and playback of music on digital audio players.</p>
Re:	Appears in front of mail subject which stands for "replied" mail. Usually automatically added by the system.

Fw:	Appears in front of mail subject which stands for “forwarded” mail. Usually automatically added by the system.
Cc:(carbon copy)	A mail is simultaneously sent to more than one person, and the receiver may clearly know who else is getting this mail.
Bcc:(blind carbon copy)	Send mail to more than one person but the receiver won’t be able to know who else gets it.
Attached	Files are attached to a mail. Be aware of size of the file. An over-sized attachment may over-load other people’s mail box or is rejected by system.

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