How to access one e-mail account from multiple PC's

May 19th, 2009, 4:13 pm · 2 Comments · posted by Ed Schwartz, NOCCC

*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org. And don't forget to stop by the Gadgetress' home for the PC Club, at ocregister.com/link/pcclub, to find out how to ask a question and read past answers.*

QUESTION: I have a desktop that uses Outlook Express and a laptop that uses Microsoft Outlook to send and receive e-mails. My e-mail address is the same for both but I don't receive the same e-mails on both services. I may receive 10 e-mails in Outlook Express and I will receive only five of them in Microsoft Outlook. How is this possible if the two computers are set up to send and receive using the same e-mail address? *~Tony*
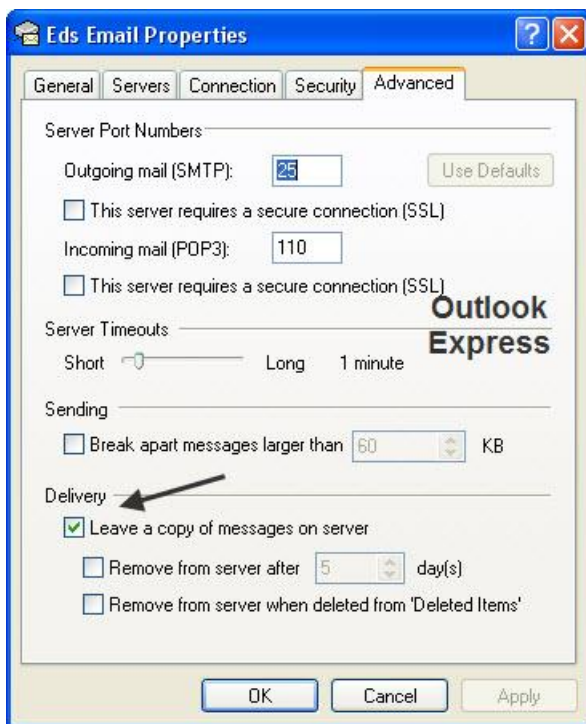
PC CLUB: Not only is e-mail one of the most popular uses for a PC, Tony, but it is also one of the most frequent causes of frustration. Let's begin by describing the two classes of e-mail services and how they behave.

1. **First, let's discuss Internet mail.** This class of service uses programs such as Outlook and Outlook Express to retrieve messages from an e-mail server. When these programs start up they perform a Send/Receive operation, which not only transfers all messages from the e-mail server to your PC but deletes them from the server. This can confuse users. What this means is if one computer checks e-mail at noon today and the second computer checks tomorrow, the second computer will only be able to retrieve messages received after noon today. This makes it impossible to have both PCs retrieve the same messages. This reason alone is why you should not use this type of setup.

Not to worry, though, there is a solution to your problem. Before we get to that, however, let's discuss the other class of e-mail known as Web mail.

2. **Web mail services**, such as Yahoo mail and Hotmail behave differently. When you log onto these services online, the messages are not transferred to your PC. Instead, they continue to reside on the server until you delete them. This makes it possible to access your Web mail account from any PC with an Internet connection as long as you know your user ID and password. The messages are always there and will be the same regardless of the PC that connects to the service. This makes Web mail attractive for many users.
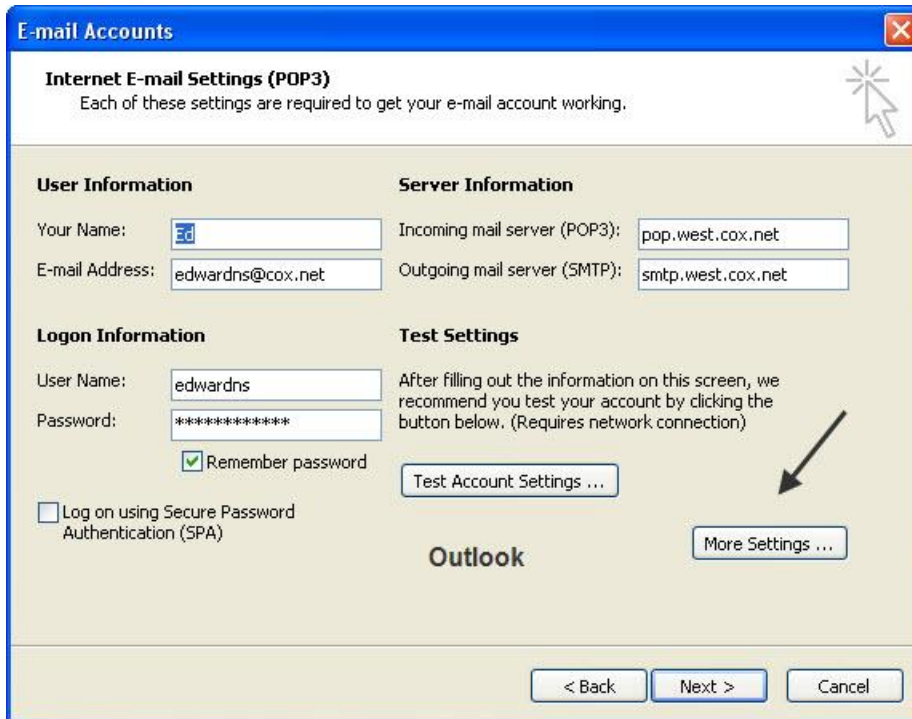

Now for some solutions.

To enable both Outlook Express and Outlook to retrieve the same messages, you must change each program's settings so they leave all the messages on the server.

To set this up with Outlook Express (see image on right), follow these steps:

1. Open Outlook Express
2. Click "Tools"
3. Select "Accounts" and choose the account you want to change.
4. Click "Properties" on the right.
5. Next, click the "Advanced" tab and place a check in the option "Leave a copy of messages on server."
6. Click "OK" and "Close."

For Outlook, follow these steps (see image below):

1. Open Outlook
2. Go to "Tools"
3. Go to "E-mail Accounts" and select "View or change existing E-mail accounts."
4. Select an account and click "Change."
5. Click the "More Setting" button and select the "Advanced" tab.
6. Check "Leave a copy of messages on server."
7. Click "OK" and then "Cancel."

With both of these programs you get to choose when messages should be deleted from the server. I'd recommend limiting it to a certain number of days, otherwise the server will accumulate too many messages. For example if you choose 10 days, then you'll have 10 days after the first PC checks in to access the e-mail with the second PC. You should set this period to coincide with your particular habits.

A second solution is to pick one computer to be the source of all e-mail and then never use other PCs to check e-mail. Instead, use your provider's Web mail service for other PCs. For example, Cox Cable users can check their e-mail online by logging in at webmail.cox.net. You can read all the messages in your inbox. Just remember, don't delete any of them so they will be available for either PC to read at a later time. For providers other than Cox, contact them and ask how to access their Web mail. You can read more about the Cox Web mail service at http://bit.ly/110sEb.
~Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his blog at www.edwardns.com/blog