



*Let go of that clutter in your mind,
body, relationships, and computers...*



Respectful E-mailing via "Bcc:"

It doesn't matter which e-mail management software program you use to send and receive your e-mail. They all have the same three choices when it comes to entering an e-mail address (or addresses) in a message you wish to send—whether it is a message you personally create, or one that you received from someone else and are forwarding to one or more individuals. In some programs your choices are called *fields*; in some they are called *headers*; in others they may be labeled something else. Regardless, you will recognize them as you see them below:

1. To
2. Cc
3. Bcc

The first two work exactly the same way. If you place an e-mail address in the "To" or "Cc" blocks that e-mail address will be displayed and visible to *everyone* who receives a copy of that e-mail message. That is true regardless of the number of e-mail addresses in the field. Many of us have received e-mails with seemingly infinite numbers of e-mail addresses listed at the top of the message.

The third works very differently. You could put 1, or 500, or 5000, or more e-mail addresses into the Bcc field and when that e-mail arrives in the inbox of your 500 closest friends, the only e-mail address showing will be theirs.

"Bcc" stands for blind carbon copy; this has evolved electronically from

days long ago when correspondence was actually typed on a typewriter with various carbon copies—a pink, or yellow, or blue for example. At the bottom of the correspondence, often we would type “cc to:” and then to whom the copy was going after the colon.

A *blind* carbon copy indeed went somewhere; however, to whom it was going was not found anywhere on the original, only on the carbon copies. A small piece of paper was placed in the typewriter exactly where the keys would hit and “bcc to:” was typed along with where the blind copy was headed. The individual receiving the original had no knowledge that a blind carbon copy even existed. The “cc to:” was on all copies; the “bcc to:” was on the carbon copies only.

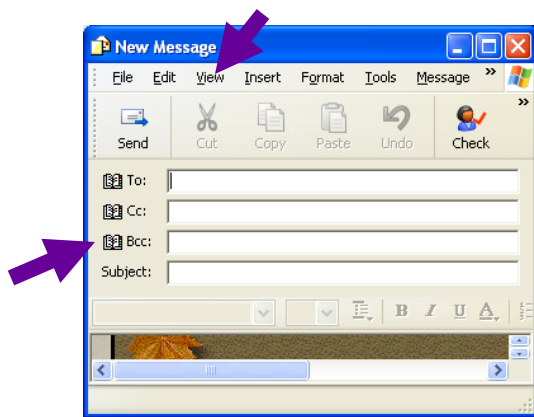
If you send an e-mail to *one* individual consider using the “To:” block. When you are sending your message to more than one individual, send the message “To:” *your* e-mail address and use the “Bcc:” field for *all* other e-mail addressees. You can even leave the “To:” field completely blank, just use the “Bcc:” field and your message will happily be sent to all addresses in the “Bcc:” field. This protects the privacy of the individuals you are e-mailing and it prevents any e-mail recipient from gathering e-mail addresses which is sometimes known as *harvesting*.

Let’s recap. Say you send an e-mail to 15 people. Any e-mail address placed in the “To:” or the “Cc:” fields shows up for everyone to see when the message is delivered to those 15 individuals. All the e-mail addresses, all 15 of them will appear on all the messages delivered. Using the “Bcc:” field prevents this from happening because when using the “Bcc:” field each individual receives your e-mail message with only their own e-mail address showing. No one has any idea who else received the same message. It looks like one e-mail was sent to one individual, when it could have been sent to thousands or more.

Folks often wonder how “so-in-so” go his or her e-mail address. This is one very easy way to openly share e-mail addresses across the planet.

When you *forward* e-mail to many e-mail addresses that already have a gazillion e-mail addresses showing, you are compounding an already frustrating problem.

In Outlook Express as an example, when an e-mail message is created, it looks similar to the picture below. If you use this program and the Bcc: field is not showing when you create a new e-mail, just left click once on VIEW and then on ALL HEADERS.



The figure is from my book *Basic & Respectful E-mailing Using Outlook Express* (2004). For more information about that book please click on the link below:

<http://www.buybooksontheweb.com/description.asp?ISBN=0-7414-2120-8>

Remembering and/or finding BCC addressees after using the BCC is yet another story. If you want to later look at the list of individuals to whom you sent your message via the "BCC:" field, it is not apparently obvious. In Outlook Express, you must view the sent message via the "Sent Items" folder. Right click on the message you are wondering about that is in the "Sent Items" folder, and then left click on "Properties." Then left click on the "Details" tab. The BCC addresses are listed there. For those using Yahoo Mail, the procedure is the same but you must be using their latest "Beta" version to see the BCC addressees.

If you don't currently know how to "Bcc:" in your specific e-mail management program, go to their HELP menu and type in Bcc.

Enjoy!