

## Mind Your Manners

By Jay Nelson, *Editor*

Email is one of the greatest conveniences of the Internet. However, it can also create trouble just as easily. Hasty replies, unclear writing, jokes that are misconstrued, are among the hazards that befall the best-intentioned correspondents, while the feeling of anonymity can inspire thoughtless cruelty in the worst in the form of verbal bashing or "flaming."

A certain amount of politeness or "**netiquette**," as it's termed online, is useful to diminish chances of misunderstanding and hurt feelings. There's no universally accepted standard or arbiter of online courtesy, but adhering to a few principles can make avoiding foot-in-mouth disease much easier.

**Always assume every discussion is public.** You never know who may see what you write, now or years later. Email is about as secure as a postcard, and should be treated as such.

Plain text email does not render subtle meanings well. Since there's no way to judge tone of voice or expression, visual cues need to be used, especially for dark humor, sarcasm and irony. Thus "**smilies**" or "emoticons" and abbreviations like <g> for "giggle" or LOL for "laugh out loud" ROFLOL, "roll on the floor, laughing out loud" and so on, are plentiful and can be lifesavers. Use them freely whenever there's the slightest doubt that your intended meaning could be misinterpreted.

**Quoting** can be an art, and a challenge. Many email programs are set to automatically quote the entire text of everything written before. Often what's quoted may include much extraneous verbiage, and you may delete what is unnecessary. To indicate the missing portion, mark it with "[**snip**]", but whether you place your reply above or below depends on your audience. Some mailing lists, for example, can be quite insistent on putting one's reply on the bottom, others on top.

And of course, good, old-fashioned politeness pays off. Remember the Golden Rule. Insult and you will be insulted in return. "Please" and "thank you" are never out of style.

### Net Notes

To transmit data across telephone lines, information is transformed into discreet pulses of audible tones. Thus your dial-up or ADSL connection works as if your modem and the server are **singing** to each other.

## Managing Your SWCP Account Online

By Josh Gentry, *Systems Administrator*

The SWCP website offers you several handy tools for managing your Southwest Cyberport account.

On the far left side of the SWCP home page at <http://www.swcp.com>, there is a link, "**Account Management**." If you click on that link you will get a login prompt. Enter your SWCP email username and password, and you will find the **Account Services** page. On this page are useful tools for managing your account, including.

\* Set up server-side **anti-spam filters** – This is one of the most useful tools. Using a web interface, you can configure spam filtering customized to your account. It won't end spam, but it can significantly reduce the junk email that you receive. See the back page for a first of a helpful series of articles on how to use them.

\* Send SWCP an **authenticated message** – This is useful when communicating with SWCP when you are away from your home or office. Requiring your password shows us that it is from you.

\* **Request web publishing** – This is just one of the services you can add to your account via the website.

\* **View your SWCP invoices** – You can view several months worth of your SWCP invoices online.

\* **Manage email aliases for your domains** – If you own a domain hosted here, you can add, edit, and remove email aliases for that domain. You can also manage your domain renewals with the Manage your domain renewals link.

\* Make a **payment on your account** – Securely send us a payment on your account via credit card, which will be cleared and credited the next business day.

\* Create **temporary email alias** – To protect your primary email address from spam, use a handy temporary address when corresponding with strangers.

Check out the many other helpful services there, too.

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## Getting the Best Out of Tech Support, Part 3

If you're calling with an Internet software usage problem, note:

- **Software** and **version** that you are using.
- Any **software, upgrades, or updates** that you added recently.

If you cannot dial in or your **dialup connection** drops or is unreasonably slow, the following might be handy:

- **Phone number** your dialer is configured to call.
- **Modem brand** and **model**.
- Also, note if there is any unusual **amount of noise** on the line when you call. Often phone line quality can be adversely affected by high winds or rain, especially older lines.

If it's **DSL** related:

- **DSL modem** or router brand and model.
- **Flashing, red, or unlit** lights on the DSL router.

To summarize, these are the types of problems that our crack Tech Support team is best at helping you with:

- **DSL router** problems.
- **Modem** disconnects.
- **Below normal speeds** downloading and/or uploading.
- **Cannot reach** some Internet site.
- **Email getting bounced, repeated, or not downloading.**
- Setting up and maintaining our server-side **spam filters**.
- **Anything Internet or networking related.**
- **Account or online security questions.**

However, SWCP Tech Support cannot do everything. We're sorry, but our technical support is limited to Internet-related problems only, and only those access services we work with.

## Using Spam Filters On Our Servers

By **Ronald Garduno**, *Technical Analyst*

Chances are extremely high that like most users, you've received lots of unsolicited emails offering great deals on (probably fake) pharmaceutical drugs, stock "tips" (hawking worthless investments), and pleas from Nigerian bankers offering to "share their riches". Called "**spam**", these annoyances now make up *more than 90%* of all email, and it's an ongoing fight to block them. **SWCP's server-side spam filters**, accessible from our homepage at <http://www.swcp.com>, can be a big help.

### *What are the spam filters?*

Our server-side spam filters are a set of rules and programs which we run on our mail servers in order to remove unsolicited email, or spam. They are written in part by volunteers around the world who, like you, are tired of getting junk emails.

### *How do they work?*

The main server filter available to SWCP customers, called **SpamAssassin**, scans every email you receive and assigns each a positive or negative score based on certain known features of spam and legitimate messages which the program has learned to discern. However, it is impossible to recognize all spam messages. The common features SpamAssassin uses to determine a message's likelihood of being spam are many and varied but publicly available. Unfortunately, smart spammers can learn to avoid them.

***Next month — first tips on filtering spam.***



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