MAIL

Command line interface for read and sending mail

Synopsis

mail [-x *debug*] [-p] [-t] [-f *name*]
mail [-x *debug*] [-p] [-t] [-u *userid*]
mail [-x *debug*] [-s *subject*] *address* ... [-c] *address* ... [-b] *address*

Availability

MS-DOS, Windows 3.x, OS/2, and Windows NT

Description

The MAIL command is used to both compose and read mail. It provides a human interface to the user mailboxes, and formats mail for the RMAIL command to perform delivery to local and remote users.

If MAIL is invoked interactively with one or more addresses, it prompts for the subject of the message (if not provided via the -s flag), and then prompts for the text of the message either directly or via a user specified editor. (See **The UUPC/extended UUPC.RC and [userid].RC files**, page 75, to find out how to specify an editor. The program then prompts for the action to take (list, edit, input additional lines of text directly, abort, or send) until the message is sent or aborted. When sent, the required RFC-822 headers are added to the mail and the entire message is passed to RMAIL for delivery.

If MAIL is invoked with one or more addresses and the input is not the keyboard, then the input is taken without prompting or editing and passed to RMAIL with the appropriate RFC-822 headers.

If invoked without addresses to send mail to, MAIL reads the user's system mailbox (or other mailbox if specified on the command line), displays a one line summary of each message, and prompts for a user command with a item number and a question mark (?). Commands can be issued to read, save, delete, or send mail until the program is terminated by the quit or exit commands.

The following option is always accepted by MAIL:

-x *debug* — Amount of debugging information to display. The default is taken from the environment variable UUPCDEBUG if set and is otherwise 0. The higher the debug level, the more information overwhelms the unsuspecting user.

The following options are accepted when composing mail:

-s *subject* — Subject of the message to send. If multiple words, this must be enclosed in quotes. This option must precede any addresses and the -c and/or -b flags, if supplied.

-c *address* — One or more carbon copy addresses. Such addresses are listed under the CC: field of the RFC-822 header rather than in the To: field. One or more addresses must be listed after the -c flag.

-b *address* — One or more blind carbon copy addresses. Such addresses are listed under the Bcc: field of the RFC-822 header, which is *dropped* by RMAIL after processing. Thus, no one sees these addresses in their mail headers.

The following options are accepted when reading mail:

-f *filename* Name of the file to read rather than the system mailbox. See below for the syntax of accepted file names.

-u *userid* Name of the user whose system mailbox is to be read.

-t Rather than display who mail is from in the one summary, display who the mail is to. This is automatically enabled for the file defined by the UUPC.RC variable **FileSent=** (See **The UUPC/extended UUPC.RC and [userid].RC files**, page 75, for a further explanation.), which defines where a copy of mail you send is saved. If the **-t** flag is specified for the **FileSent=** file, it reverts to normal processing (displaying whom the mail is from).

-p Print all the mail in the specified mailbox and exit.

Types of operands

In the list of commands available when reading mail, *messages* refers to one or more messages in the mail box. These items can be specified in one of the following ways:

Message Number	A single numeric value, the special character dot (.) to specify the current item, or the special character dollar sign ($) to specify the last item in the mailbox.
Message range	Two message numbers separated by a hyphen (-). The messages must be in ascending order; for example, 1-$ is valid, but $-1 is not valid.
List of messages	A list of message numbers and/or message ranges, separated by spaces. The list need not be in ascending order. An example is: 1-5 8 7 14-17.
Asterisk (*)	Selects all messages in the mailbox
Subject	A slash (/) followed by a subject to search for, optionally followed by a terminating slash. Each Subject: or Resent-Subject: will be searched for the specified string. An example is /UUPC bugs/
User id	A single word (no white space) appearing in the From or Resent-From lines of the mail header. Note that if the command accepts both an item and a userid, you cannot specify the item as a user id. **Note:** If the command accepts both an item and file name and you specify a user id for the item, you must explicitly provide the default filename unless the user id includes the characters at sign (@), percent sign (%), or exclamation point (!).

Some commands also allow file names as operands. File names may look like any of the following:

Type of file	Description	Example
Simple file name	An MS-DOS file name with no path name	snuffles.spb

Relative path name	An MS-DOS file name with one or more back slashes (\) which does not begin with a back slash or drive letter.	mail\snuffles.spb
Absolute path name	An MS-DOS file name with one or more back slashes (\) which begins with a back slash or drive letter.	d:\uupc\snuffles.spb
UNC name	Universal Naming Convention name. A file located on a network server.	\\kewgate\uupc\mail\snuffles.spb
Mailbox	A simple file name prefixed by the plus sign (+) character. This will cause the file be referenced as if it is the mailbox for the specified user. For example, +postmast refers to the mailbox for user postmast.	+snuffles
Relative to your home directory	A simple file name preceded by a tilde and slash (~/). The file is then referenced by the prepending the home directory listed in your [*userid*].RC to the simple file name.	~/oldmail/snuffles.spb
Relative to another's home directory.	A simple file name preceded by a tilde, the userid, and a slash (~userid/). The file is then referenced by the prepending the home directory listed in the PASSWD file for user "userid" to the simple file name.	~snuffles/oldmail.spb

When sending mail from the command line or via the **mail** or **forward** commands, the destination address must be entered. Acceptable addresses look like any of the following:

Address type	Description	Example
userid	A simple user id, for delivery on the local system.	snuffles
userid@*node*	A user id and node combination, for delivery to *userid* on system *node*.	snuffles@kew.com
node!*userid*	A user id and node combination, for delivery to *userid* on system *node*	smersh!kendra!snuffles
nickname	A user or list defined in the user's ALIASES.TXT file or local system aliases file.	pbear

If the flag **-c** is inserted before a user id, then mail to the following users is sent as Carbon Copy (Cc:) addresses. If the flag **-b** is inserted before a user id, then mail to the following users is sent as blind carbon copies. Their addresses do not appear in the mail header. The blind carbon copy flag must follow any all normal addresses and carbon copy addressees.

Example: mail -s "Test message" snuffles -c athena!kewms -b software@kew.com

Commands available when reading mail

Commands are entered in response to the mail question mark prompt (?). All commands must be separated from their operands, if any, by white space. Most commands can be abbreviated to a single character; the commands which cannot be so abbreviated and their shortest allowable abbreviation are **debug** (**deb**), **dquit** (**dq**), **previous** (**pre**), **set** (**se**), and **status** (**st**).

The following commands can be used within MAIL:

empty line	If the current message has not been read, then an empty line acts as a **print** command; otherwise, it acts as a **next** command.
! *command*	Executes *command* as an MS-DOS, OS/2, or Windows NT command. If *command* is omitted, runs an inferior command processor (which gives the user a new command prompt.)
?	Prints a summary of commands available.
+ *integer*	Alias for **next** command.
- *integer*	Alias for **up** command.
alias *a1 a2 a3*	Displays alias information loaded from user's ALIASES.TXT file for nicknames *a1 a2 a3.* If an alias is list of other aliases, the list is recursively exploded and displayed. This command has no default operand. At least one alias must be specified.
copy *items file*	Copies mail *items* into *file* with headers. Default *file* is the printer on device **PRN**.
debug *integer*	Sets internal trace level to *integer.* The default is 0 when **mail** starts, and gets set to 1 if you just type "debug" without entering an *integer.* The internal trace level can also be set by the command line flag **-x.**
delete *messages*	Sets status of *messages* to deleted. Deleted messages are ignored when selecting mail by subject or user id, and are purged from the mailbox when the **quit** command is issued. See also **undelete**.
dquit *messages*	Short for **delete** followed by **quit.**
exit	Exits mail without updating mailbox; deleted items are left alone. Compare this to the **quit** command.
forward *messages address*	Resends *messages* to *address.* Note that if the **askcc** option is set, each *message* forwarded will be prompted for Carbon Copy addresses.
go *messages*	Positions to the last of the *messages* selected.
headers	Displays summary information for all items in the mailbox.
Headers *items*	Displays summary information for the selected *items* in the mailbox.

help	Prints this long help text.
mail -s *subject address* mail *address*	Interactively send mail to *address* with optional *subject.*
next *integer*	Move down in mailbox by *integer* items. Default is 1.
previous *integer*	Alias of **up** command.
print *messages*	Display *messages* from the mailbox, using the external pager if defined in the configuration file and ignoring (not printing) a standard list of RFC-822 fields in the mail header such as Received: and Message-Id:. Compare this to the **Print**, **type**, and **Type** commands.
Print *messages*	Display *messages* from mailbox, using internal pager and ignoring (not printing) a standard list of RFC-822 fields in the mail header.
quit	Terminates the reading of mail. All deleted messages are purged, and all other messages are saved in the original mailbox or in ~/mbox depending on the setting of the **save** flag.
reply *messages*	Interactively sends mail to the authors of each of the *messages* requested. Note that each item is replied to separately, specifying "reply 1-10" will send ten pieces of mail to ten people.
save *messages file*	Saves the specified *messages* complete with mail headers into *file*, and then deletes the *messages.* Compare this to the **copy** and **write** commands.
set	Sets various Boolean options. These option can also be set in your [*userid*].RC file. The options are listed in **The UUPC/extended UUPC.RC and [userid].RC files**, page 75.
status	Reports miscellaneous program information, including: The version and creation time of the program The operating system version The current user address and related information The current file name, size, and date last updated
type *messages*	Display *messages* from mailbox, using external pager if available and displaying RFC-822 fields suppressed by the **print** command. Compare this to the p**rint**, **Print**, and **Type** commands**.**
Type *messages*	Display *messages* from mailbox, using internal pager and displaying RFC-822 fields suppressed by the **print** and **Print** commands.
undelete *messages*	Changes status of *messages* to unread.
write *messages file*	Writes *messages* to *file* without the RFC-822 headers and then deletes them. The default *file* is **~/mbox**. Compare this to the **copy** and **save** commands.
xit	Alias for the **exit** command.

Subcommands available while sending mail:

~a	Insert standard signature file.
~A	Insert alternate signature file.
~e	Invoke editor on current message.
~m *item*	Include body of message(s) defined by *item*, indented.
~M *item*	Include message(s) define by *item* with headers, indented.
~f *item*	Include body of message(s) defined by *item*, unindented.
~F *item*	Include message(s) define by *item* with headers, unindented.
~p	Print message entered so far using external pager.
~P	Print message entered so far.
~r *file*	Read in an arbitrary file.
~s *subject*	Add new subject or replace existing subject with *subject*
~v	Alias for ~e command (for compatibility with UNIX sendmail).
~?	Display this mail subcommand list.
~|*cmd*	Filter message entered so far through *cmd*
~!*cmd*	Execute command (does not alter message)
~~	Enter a data line beginning with a tilde (~)

When entering mail at the ? prompt, use these commands by putting the ~ in column 1.

Note: The **~m** and **~M** commands use the same syntax to describe for items as the main mail parser; this allows specifying message number(s), user id, or subject. Type "help" at a MAIL prompt for a detailed description of the allowed syntax.

Note: The exact meaning of **~p** and **~P** commands can be inverted by the use of the **pager** option.

Files

/uupc/tilde.hlp	Help file for tilde (~) commands when sending mail.
/uupc/mail/*[userid]*.spb	System Mailbox for *[userid]*.

Bugs

Command line option checking is not as robust as it could be.

The automatic advancing of the current item pointer to an undeleted item makes multiple operations on a deleted item interesting.

Under MS-DOS, redirection from NUL looks like a device, not a file, and thus the program prompts for input when it has no business doing so.

The copy command does not properly copy files to the printer under OS/2.

MAIL incorrectly parses an return address with a quoted exclamation point, such as:

> "Smarter than the average bear!" <snuffles@kendra.kew.com>

Some editors, like EDLIN, cause the signature file to be lost because the editor appends a ^Z (Ctrl-Z) to the file.

The reply command gets confused by mixed mode addresses.

How MAIL determines return addresses is sometimes flaky.

The list of RFC-822 headers which are suppressed by the print command cannot be altered by the user; they are displayed in an all or nothing fashion.

There is no 'Replyall' command to reply to all interested parties to a message.

In MAIL, entering '1' should print the first item in the mailbox if the option 'autoprint' is set. Currently, it doesn't.

The list of ignored headers is not configurable.

The user cannot configure which header lines are used by MAIL in determining From or Replyto addresses.

See Also

RMAIL

History

This is the 24th revision of this document and was last updated on October 4, 1993 by Katherine Derbyshire.

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