Mailing Lists

1.0 (17/07/2003)

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> **Note:**
> These guidelines have been adapted from the Jakarta Project, which you can find at:
> http://jakarta.apache.org/site/mail.html
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1. Guidelines

1.1. About

A mailing list is an electronic discussion forum that anyone can subscribe to. When someone sends an email message to the mailing list, a copy of that message is broadcast to everyone who is subscribed to that mailing list. Mailing lists provide a simple and effective communication mechanism. With potentially thousands of subscribers, there is a common set of etiquette guidelines that you should observe. Please keep on reading.

1.2. "Respect the mailing list type."

There are generally two types of lists:

- **The "User" lists:**
  where you can send questions and comments about configuration, setup, usage and other "user" types of questions.
- **The "Developer" lists:**
  where you can send questions and comments about the actual software source code and general "development" types of questions.

Some questions are appropriate for posting on both the "user" and the "developer" lists. In this case, pick one and only one. Do not cross post.

Asking a configuration question on the developers list is frowned upon because developers' time is as precious as yours. By contacting them directly instead of the user base you are abusing resources. In fact, it is unlikely that you will get a quicker answer, if at all.

In some cases you probably will want to use the <u>Support Request facility</u> instead.

1.3. "Join the lists that are appropriate for your discussion."

Please make sure that you are joining the list that is appropriate for the topic that you would like to discuss.

1.4. "Ask smart questions."

Every volunteer project obtains its strength from the people involved in it. You are welcome to join any of our mailing lists. You can choose to lurk, or actively participate; it's up to you. The level of community responsiveness to specific questions is generally directly proportional to the amount of effort you spend formulating your question. Eric Raymond has even written an essay entitled *"Asking Smart Questions"* precisely on this topic. Although somewhat militant, it is definitely worth reading.

1.5. "Keep your email short and to the point."

If your email is more than about a page of text, chances are that it won't get read by very many people. It is much better to try to pack a lot of informative information (see above about asking smart questions) into as small of an email as possible. If you are replying to a previous email, it is a good idea to only quote the parts that you are replying to and to remove the unnecessary bits. This makes it easier for people to follow a thread as well as making the email archives easier to search and read.

1.6. "Do your best to ensure that you are not sending HTML or Stylelized email to the list."

If you are using Outlook or Outlook Express or Eudora, chances are that you are sending HTML email by default. There is usually a setting that will allow you to send "Plain Text" email. If you are using Microsoft products to send email, there are several bugs in the software that prevent you from turning off the sending of HTML email. Please read this <u>page</u> as well...

1.7. "Watch where you are sending email."

The majority of our mailing lists have set the Reply-To to go back to the list. That means that when you Reply to a message, it will go to the list and not to the original author directly. The reason is because it helps facilitate discussion on the list for everyone to benefit from. Be careful of this as sometimes you may intend to reply to a message directly to someone

instead of the entire list.

The appropriate contents of the Reply-To header is an age-old debate that should not be brought up on the mailing lists. You can examine opposing points of view condemning our convention and condoning it. Bringing this up for debate on a mailing list will add nothing new and is considered off-topic.

1.8. "Do not cross post messages."

In other words, pick a mailing list and send your messages to that mailing list only. Do not send your messages to multiple mailing lists. The reason is that people may be subscribed to one list and not to the other. Therefore, some people will only see part of the conversation.

2. Now that you have read above....

Now that you have read the guidelines above, *here* you find a list that gives you a listing of the different mailing lists that you can join. If you did not read the above information, chances are high that you will be pointed out to do so. You might as well read it now and save yourself the embarrassment.