Telecommunications

E-mail

By far the most popular use of the Internet is for the exchange of electronic mail, or e-mail. E-mail is a messaging system that allows any user on the Internet to send a message to any other user. With e-mail you can send messages addressed to specific individuals, receive messages from others, and receive messages from members of a group.

Telecommunications
Communicating information—including data, text, pictures, voice, and video.

E-mail
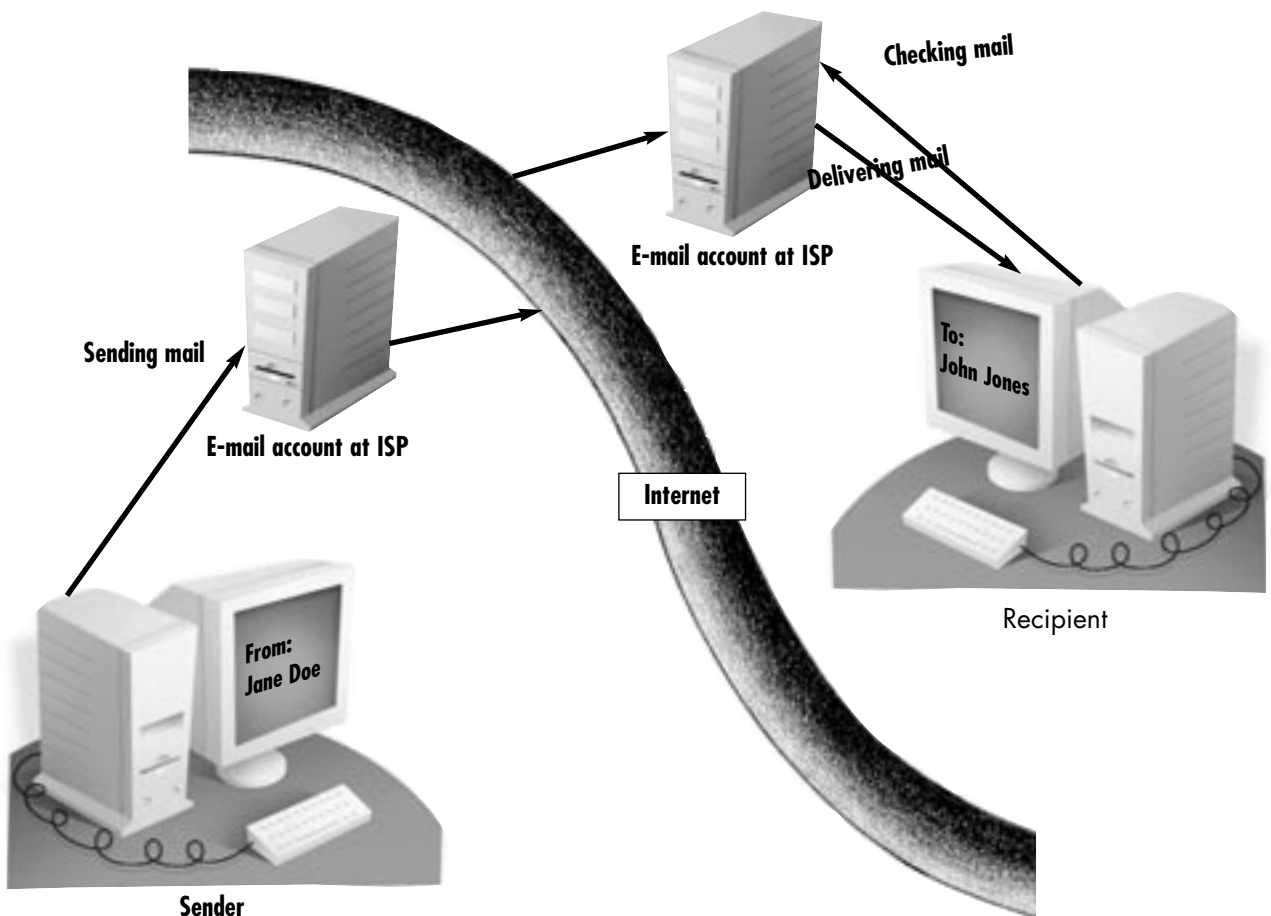Electronic mail, or messages sent from one person to another via computer.

Sample e-mail message in an Outlook Express account

How E-mail Works

Think of your e-mail account as a virtual post office box. A post office box is a place where mail can be sent and waits until the owner of the post office box retrieves it. Electronic mail works in much the same way.

As people send you messages, these electronic files go to your e-mail account. They are stored in your account until you come to pick them up. To pick up your mail, you use an electronic mail application.

The e-mail application's job is to collect your mail from the mail server and allow you to save it to your computer. The software also allows you to compose messages and send them to others.

Checking mail

Delivering mail

E-mail account at ISP

To:
John Jones

Sending mail

E-mail account at ISP

Internet

Recipient

From:
Jane Doe

Sender

E-mail Addresses

An e-mail message is always sent to an address. An e-mail address will contain the user name of the individual to whom you are sending the message and the name of the server where his or her mail is collected. For example, the following address is for a fictional person named Jane Doe:

janed@xyz.com

Jane's user ID is janed, and her electronic mailbox is located at her place of work, a company called XYZ. *Com* at the end of an address denotes a commercial e-mail account. Other common endings are *edu* for educational institutions, *org* for organizations, and *gov* for governmental institutions. Note that the user ID and the mailbox computer are separated by the @ symbol.

Most e-mail addresses can be typed in all lower-case letters, all capital letters, or a combination of the two. However, some addresses are "case dependent," meaning you need to type them exactly as they appear or the message will be returned to you, marked as undeliverable.

Example of returned e-mail message