What should I put in my Out of Office message?

Q: What should I put in my Out of Office message?

Answer

It is wise not to give too many details in your auto-reply message. Out of Office Assistant will auto-reply to any message you receive, including any junk mail or messages from spammers.

For example, you may not wish to give specifics such as that you will be out of town, on vacation, or at a conference. Instead you could use generic terminology such as:

> *I will be out of the office until xxx, and will not be checking email. If you need immediate assistance, please send a message to xxx, or call xxx.*

or

> *I will not be checking my email until xxx. If you need immediate assistance contact xxx.*

While you can set "Out of Office Assistant" to automatically forward your messages to an associate while you are gone, you cannot have it forward your mail to any email account which is not part of the Exchange system. This means that mail cannot be forwarded to an AOL, Gmail, Yahoo, or any other email account with a domain other than mit.edu.
Note: Due to MIT requirements, automatically forwarding email off of the MIT Exchange email system is not allowed.

For example, if you are project lead on a specific project and you are expecting emails which require immediate response, you might designate someone in the office to handle all inquires or communication regarding the project. In this case, the "Out of Office Assistant" is an excellent tool to use.

If your account has subscriptions to any listservs or mailing lists, it is advisable to suspend any mail you will be receiving from those lists during those periods where you are going to use the "Out of Office Assistant". By doing this, you avoid the risk of auto replying to any mailing lists. Usually listservs have features which allow you to suspend receiving email for a time. If your listserv has a web site, try accessing that web site or else you could send an email to the administrator of the list.

When someone sends you a message and you have the "Out of Office Assistant" turned on, they will receive the reply you have specified only once, no matter how many times they send you a message during the period of time you have specified.

Remember: To turn off the "Out of Office Assistant." when you return. You will not be reminded by Outlook to turn it off.