

# Email Attachments

A perplexed (and clever) CCC member asked:

Although attachments in a spiritual sense are thought to bring suffering. I have forgotten, if I ever knew, how to send an attachment. Help please.

And, concluded:

If I send an attachment to a PC\* is there something different that I have to do?

She is not alone. For some reason, requests for help with email attachments were popular this month.

The email attachment question is a huge issue. Since the creation of email, attachments have been a confusing problem for most users. Tech expert/columnist, Stewart Alsop, has even called for a ban on the use of attachments.

Attachments are a huge, complex subject! Got a few hours? OK, the brief version (honest, this is as brief as I can make it).

Attachments are files attached to emails. Like any file, an attachment is tied to the application that made it. So, a *Microsoft Word* file can only be opened by *Microsoft Word*. An *AppleWorks* file can only be opened by *AppleWorks*. A *Photoshop* file can only be opened by *Photoshop*. And, so on. This means that you have to be aware of the software that the email recipient has. For example, if you send a *Microsoft PowerPoint* file as an attachment to someone who doesn't have *Microsoft PowerPoint*, that file is useless to them; it won't open.

**Requirement 1: only send attachments that you know the recipient can open.**

Different operating systems have different naming conventions. We use *Mac OS X*, your recipient may be using *Microsoft Windows*. *Mac OS X* pretty much doesn't care how a file is named, but *Windows* is very finicky about naming. For a file to easily open on a computer using *Microsoft Windows*, the file's name needs to have a special suffix attached to it. The suffix signifies to *Windows* what application is associated with the file. Without the suffix, *Windows* will not know what to do with the file and the recipient will think that they cannot open the file.

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\* PC meaning a computer using Microsoft's *Windows* operating system.

Here is a sampling of the most common file name suffixes (also known as file extensions):

.doc = Microsoft Word

.rtf = Microsoft Word (rich text)

.xls = Microsoft Excel

.ppt = Microsoft PowerPoint (document)

.pps = Microsoft PowerPoint (slideshow)

.psd = Photoshop

.cwk = AppleWorks or ClarisWorks

.pdf = Adobe Acrobat

.pages = Pages

.txt = text

.jpg = JPEG picture file

.zip = archived or compressed file

.exe = MS Windows application

You can add suffixes to your file names before attaching them to an email or let Apple's *Mail* application do the job for you (see below). *Windows* also will misbehave if certain characters are used in file names. For instance, slash characters (/ and \) are illegal in file names under *Windows*. There are other verboten characters as well. *Mac OS X* has no forbidden characters.

**Requirement 2: attachments need to be properly named.**

Different email applications (there are dozens of them including many webmail interfaces) have different requirements as to how attachments are attached. This primarily affects older version of these applications, but you never know (or rather, you must know!) what the recipient's email application requires. Apple's *Mail* will allow attachments to be placed inline (the attachment is readable/viewable as part of the body of the email) or as an icon sitting in the email. Some email applications do not like inline attachments and will not allow them to be received. If the recipient's email application doesn't like inline attachments, you will need to archive or compress (two terms for the same thing) the file as a .zip archive before attaching it. See the attachment instructions on page 2 to learn how to archive files.

**Requirement 3: know whether the recipient's email application can handle inline attachments.**

Attachments can harbor viruses and other malware. Because of this many *Microsoft Windows* users do not allow their email application to accept attachments. Sometimes this restriction is set up by a technician and the user is unaware of this setting (or perhaps they have forgotten that they chose this behavior). This is not a concern for Macs, so Mac users never restrict attachments. If the recipient's email application is set to delete attachments, the recipient will need to allow attachments before they can be received.

**Requirement 4: know whether the recipient is set to receive attachments.**

Internet service providers have requirements specifying the maximum size of attachments sent on an email. Comcast, for instance, limits attachments to no more than 10MB. The email plus all attachments cannot add up to more than 10MB.

**Requirement 5: keep attachments well below the 10MB limit.**

Okay. Now to attach.

If the recipient is on a Mac using a local email application and not webmail, all you need to do is drag the file that you want to attach into the email that you are writing. *Done*. This assumes that the recipient has the application necessary to open the attachment (see Requirement 1).

If the recipient is using *Microsoft Windows* and their email application can handle inline attachments, name the file with the proper suffix then drag into the email that you are writing. Again, this assumes that the recipient has the application necessary to open the attachment (see Requirement 1).

If the recipient is using *Microsoft Windows* and their email application can handle inline attachments and you don't want to worry about naming conventions, click the *Attach* button in the email that you are writing. Use the "Open" dialog sheet, that drops down, to find the file that you want to attach. When you find the file, click once on it to select. Next, check the checkbox for *Send Windows-Friendly Attachments* and lastly, click the *Choose File* button (these buttons may have slightly different names depending on the version of Apple's *Mail* that you are using). As always, this assumes that the recipient has the application necessary to open the attachment (see Requirement 1).

If the recipient is using *Microsoft Windows* and their email application cannot handle inline attachments or if the recipient uses webmail on any operating system, you must first archive the file before attaching it. To do so, switch to the *Finder* by clicking the *Finder* icon in the Dock. Next, click on the file and choose *Compress <name of file>* or *Archive <name of file>* from the *File* menu. A new version of the file will appear near the original version. The new version will have a different icon

and the name will be the same as the original file with .zip as a suffix. Use this file to attach to the email.

Be aware that even if you do all of this correctly, there is a significant chance that the attachment will get mangled by the process and be unusable by the time it is received. If the recipient is an AOL member, the chances that the attachment will be mangled beyond all recognition increases to about 75% unless you are an AOL member as well. So, good luck.

### MayTip—

Avoid the *Do-they-have-the-application?* conundrum by saving your files in .pdf format. Virtually every computer, everywhere can open .pdf documents.

"PDF" your document like so:

- 1) Open the file normally.
- 2) Choose *Print* from the *File* menu.
- 3) Click the *PDF* button and choose *Save as PDF...*
- 4) Name the file (be sure to add .pdf to the end of the file name!).
- 5) Choose a place to save the PDF file (the *Desktop* is usually best).
- 6) Click the *Save* button.

The PDF version is now sitting where you saved it (the *Desktop* presumably), drag it to your email to attach.

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