

A reader asks:

Since I am new to the whole Thunderbird thing, how do I set up an "Out of office" email receipt when I am on vacation?

This is a good opportunity to remind/inform people that there exists tech help sheets, created by our Helpdesk staff, located at <http://www.bates.edu/technology-help-sheets.xml> . Check them out. Of course, they don't offer free delivery like I do so I hope you continue to read my tech tips as well. :-)

Specifically, in answer to the above question, there are instructions as well as a PowerPoint presentation linked at <http://www.bates.edu/email-filters-vacation.xml> .

You'll notice that you set your vacation message in Webmail and not Thunderbird. The reason for that is that Webmail is a server-based program and makes changes directly to your e-mail account which lives on the Bates mail server. If the server is up and running then any filtering you setup in Webmail is active, whether or not you're using Webmail at the time.

Thunderbird, on the other hand, is local machine-based, meaning that it only *accesses* e-mail from the Bates server and any filtering you create in Thunderbird is only applied to e-mail that Thunderbird is processing (reading from or writing to the server). If you set a vacation filter in Thunderbird, you'd need to leave your computer on and have Thunderbird up and running while you were gone. Not very energy efficient. :-)

A couple other advantages to setting your preferences in Webmail are:

(1) filtering occurs on the server so Thunderbird doesn't have to do it, meaning your e-mail will load faster. I'm not saying you'll notice the difference but it's there.

(2) if you access your e-mail from off-campus, say at an internet cafe in Odessa, Ukraine (been there, done that), all your filtering is intact and you don't have to weed through tons of spam.

To all those vacation-bound readers, enjoy your time away. We'll be here when you get back. :-)