An introduction to electronic mail using Pine

Electronic mail provides a convenient way to communicate with other computer users both within the University of Durham, and at other institutions throughout the world. A mailer is a computer program for sending and reading electronic mail. Many different mailers are available at the University, and messages sent by one mailer can usually be read by another.

If most of your work will be done from UNIX, then we recommend you use Pine for receiving and sending electronic mail.
Conventions:
In this document, the following conventions are used:

- A typewriter font is used for what you see on the screen.
- A bold typewriter font is used to represent the actual characters you type at the keyboard.
- A slanted typewriter font is used for items such as filenames which you should replace with particular instances.
- A bold font is used to indicate named keys on the keyboard, for example, Esc and Enter, represent the keys marked Esc and Enter, respectively.
- A bold font is also used where a technical term or command name is used in the text.
- Where two keys are separated by a forward slash (as in Ctrl/B, for example), press and hold down the first key (Ctrl), tap the second (B), and then release the first key.
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1. Introduction

1.1 What is electronic mail?

Electronic mail provides a convenient way to communicate with other computer users. You can use it to send a message to an individual user or to a group of users. The recipients may be users at the University of Durham or they may be users at other institutions in the UK and the rest of the world.

1.2 Electronic mail programs

A mailer is a computer program for sending and reading electronic mail. Many different mailers are available, and messages sent by one mailer can usually be read by another.

If most of your work will be done on a PC, then we would recommend that you use Netscape Mail or Pegasus. In particular, from an account on the Networked PC service, we recommend Netscape for sending and receiving electronic mail. Details about Netscape Mail are given in Guide 79: Using Netscape Communicator for electronic mail.

If most of your work is involved with using UNIX then we recommend you to use a mailer on UNIX called Pine. If you are already familiar with some other mailer (such as Elm or mailx), you will probably find that the mailer you know is also available here.

2. The mailer Pine

2.1 A summary of the major facilities of Pine

Pine is a mailer designed primarily for novice users, although it has many sophisticated features, and individual users can configure Pine so that it uses these features. Some of its design principles are:

- to keep things simple and straightforward with a limited number of well-selected features;
- to allow the user to switch on other more sophisticated features;
- to provide menus from which commands can be picked;
- to be forgiving of mistakes, so the user can learn-while-doing without fear of disaster; and
- to provide immediate feedback for each command.

Pine has its own tightly integrated system for scrolling through incoming messages, and its own editor for composing messages. It works on 80x24 or larger terminals making use of the full screen.
Whenever Pine displays a screen, the commands that you can use are displayed at the bottom of the screen. One of these commands provides access to information to help you use Pine.

Within Pine, you can view, save, export, delete, print, forward and reply to incoming mail. Periodic checks for new mail are made automatically. You can compose new messages using a simple editor (Pico) that has word wrapping, paragraph formatting and a spelling-checker. A message under composition may be temporarily postponed while another is composed or read.

Pine allows you to maintain address books where you can keep a list of long or frequently-used addresses. An entry in the address book can be constructed from incoming mail without needing to retype the address. Distribution lists are available, and these may refer to other lists or entries within the address book going as many levels deep as you desire.

Pine allows you to store messages in folders. It offers full screen facilities for the selection and management of folders.

2.2 How Pine works

When you use Pine, you will be manipulating some files containing messages. Pine calls these files folders. When you first use Pine, you will have three folders:

- When you send a message to someone, a copy of the message will automatically be saved in a folder called your sent-mail folder. At the beginning of each month, Pine will offer to rename your current sent-mail folder to one named for the month so you can have a different sent-mail folder for each month.
- All the messages that are sent by other people to you are stored in a folder called your INBOX folder. This file is also known as your mailbox (or your primary mailbox).
- When you are using Pine, you should decide what to do with each message that arrives in your INBOX folder. You can either delete it, or save it in a folder called your saved-messages folder.

![Diagram of Pine's file management process]

An outgoing message is composed, and then stored in the sent-mail folder

Incoming messages are stored in the INBOX folder

An incoming message is deleted

An incoming message is transferred to a saved-messages folder
More details about all of this are given in later sections of these notes.

2.3 Problems with Pine

Section 13 of this document is entitled What to do if things go wrong. You should refer to this section if you have a problem.

3. An introductory tutorial

3.1 Starting Pine

1. First, login to one of the UNIX computers (altair, vega, pahang or one of the UNIX workstations).

2. Then start Pine by typing the following command at the UNIX prompt:
   ```
   pine
   ```

Remember that UNIX is case sensitive: so use only lower case letters.

A number of things happen when you first use Pine. It will create a subdirectory in your home directory called Mail. Pine will tell you that it is doing this:

```
Creating subdirectory "/home/hudson/pg/dxy3abc/Mail" where pine will store its mail folders.
```

If this is the first time that you have used Pine, you will then see a screen welcoming you to your first use of Pine. Read the information on the screen, and then press any key.
The screen will then be replaced by one that looks something like this:

```
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
PINE 3.90-940830     MAIN MENU    Folder: INBOX  0 Messages
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
?    HELP      -  Get help using Pine
C    COMPOSE MESSAGE -  Compose and send a message
I    FOLDER INDEX    -  View messages in current folder
L    FOLDER LIST     -  Select a folder to view
A    ADDRESS BOOK    -  Update address book
S    SETUP           -  Configure or update Pine
Q    QUIT            -  Exit the Pine program
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

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The line:

```
[Opening "INBOX"...] 
```

will appear at the bottom of the screen.

If you have used Pine before, and have not used Pine during the current month, a message like the following will also appear at the bottom of the screen:

Move current "sent-mail" to "sent-mail-dec-1992"? (y/n) [n]:
At the beginning of each month Pine offers to rename your current sent-mail folder to one named for the month so you have a sent-mail folder for each month

This is probably a good idea, so if you get this message, press the Y key. Do not press the Enter key.

If you have not yet used electronic mail, and no-one has sent you a message, your INBOX folder will not yet exist. This is not a problem: it will automatically be created whenever it is needed.

If your INBOX folder exists but is empty, the message at the bottom of the screen will be replaced by one that says:

```
[Folder "INBOX" opened with 0 messages]
```

Otherwise, you should see a line that says something like:

```
[Folder "INBOX" opened with 19 messages]
```
3.2 The main menu

You should have Pine's main menu displayed on the screen.

Whenever you are in Pine, there are two lines at the bottom of the screen that are always used to list the commands you can give. You press one of the keys that are highlighted in order to give a command: you do not have to press the Enter key as well. Usually there are more commands available than can be shown on two lines. You can press the O key to see which other commands may be used. This key press is optional: it is not necessary for a valid command to be visible on the menu line before you can use it. There is always a key for getting help: it is either ? or Ctrl/G. And usually the M key can be used to get back to this main menu.

3.3 Composing and sending your first message

1 In order to compose and send a message, press the C key - do not press Enter.

You will see a screen like this:

```
------------------------------------
------------------------------------
PINE 3.90-940830   COMPOSE MESSAGE   Folder: INBOX  0 Messages
To      :
Cc      :
Attchmnt:
Subject :
----- Message Text -----  
```

Pine has started up the message composer, and has prepared a template for your message with the first four lines partially completed for you.

The first four lines constitute the header of the message. The only header line that you must fill in is the To line. Other lines can be left blank although
it is extremely useful to the recipient if you include a subject to identify your message (and makes it more likely that you will get a reply!)

The cursor is positioned to the right of the colon (the : character) on the To line. Pine is expecting you to type in the electronic mail address of the person to whom you wish to send the message.

1. Type exactly this:
   
   pine.course-director@durham.ac.uk

   If you make a mistake, use the cursor-moving keys to position over the incorrect character, and then press Ctrl/D to remove it. You can then press the correct key.

   Electronic mail addresses are insensitive to case, and so

   PINE.COURSE-DIRECTOR@DURHAM.AC.UK

   would do just as well.

   Note: Cc stands for carbon copies. On this line you can enter the addresses of other people who should get a copy of the message. The Attchmnt line is not important at this stage.

2. Use the cursor-moving keys to move down to the Subject line. As you do this, a few status messages momentarily appear at the bottom of the screen - ignore these. On the Subject line, type:

   My first message

   after the colon.

   The first few lines of the screen should now contain:

   To      : pine.course-director@durham.ac.uk
   Cc      :
   Attchmnt:
   Subject : My first message
   ----- Message Text -----

3. If this is not the case, go back to the incorrect characters and correct them.

4. Now use the cursor-moving keys to move past the line:

   ----- Message Text -----

   You should be in the first column of the line immediately underneath this line. You now have to compose the body of the message.

   You have all the facilities of the Pico editor to format the message or change what you have typed. For example:

   Ctrl/B   Move back one character (or left cursor-moving key)
   Ctrl/F   Move forward one character (or right cursor-moving key)
Ctrl/P      Move to the previous line    (or **up** cursor-moving key)
Ctrl/N      Move to the next line       (or **down** cursor-moving key)
Ctrl/A      Move to the beginning of the line
Ctrl/E      Move to the end of the line
Ctrl/@     Move to the next word       (or **Ctrl/spacebar**)
Ctrl/=      Set a mark at the current cursor position
Ctrl/D      Delete the current character

**Backspace** or **Delete**      Delete the previous character

There are reminders at the bottom of the screen about some of the other keys that you can press at this point. Pine uses the notation ^Y to mean Ctrl/Y.

Ctrl/Y      Move to the previous page
Ctrl/V      Move to the next page
Ctrl/K      If a mark has been set, **cut** (i.e., delete) from the mark to the character before the current cursor position; otherwise delete the current line.
Ctrl/U      **Uncut** (i.e., paste) text that was deleted with Ctrl/K

5 Type in a few lines of text that form the body of your message.

Note that the text that you type automatically wraps as you type past the end of a line so you do not have to press the **Enter** key. The Ctrl/J key can be used to reformat (or justify) the text of the current paragraph. You will find this useful after you have deleted some text.

Sending a message is just like dropping a letter in a postbox: you cannot get it back if you change your mind. When you have finished typing in the lines of the body of your message, check it carefully. Make sure that the To line is correct. If there are any errors, or if you want to alter anything you have typed, use the cursor-moving keys to get back to the part of the message that needs to be altered.

When you have finished composing your message, and are happy with it, you can send it off by pressing Ctrl/X.

6 Press **Ctrl/X**.

Pine will ask you to confirm that you really want to send it.

7 Just press the **Y** key.

The following messages will appear at the bottom of the screen:

```
[Sending mail....]
[Writing Fcc...]
```

You will be returned to the main menu, and the following will appear at the bottom of the screen:

```
[Message sent and copied to "sent-mail"].
```

Pine has stored a copy of the message in the sent-mail folder.
You could go on to send more messages or look at any that have been sent to you, but let us leave Pine for a moment.

3.4 Leaving Pine

1. You can leave Pine by returning to the main menu, and pressing the Q key - just Q - there is no need to press the Enter key.

Pine will ask you to confirm that you want to leave Pine:

Really quit pine?

2. Press the Y key.

You will see the message

Pine finished

and then you will be returned to the UNIX prompt.

4. Mailnames and electronic mail addresses

4.1 The format of mailnames and electronic mail addresses

Here are some examples of electronic mail addresses:

```
pine.course-director@durham.ac.uk
d.a.simpson@durham.ac.uk
Fred.Bloggs@durham.ac.uk
```

An address is in two parts with a commercial at sign (an @ character) in the middle. Before the @ comes the mailname. Normally, this is based on the person's name. After the @ comes the sitename which is durham.ac.uk if the person is a Durham user. The dots in both parts are important. Spaces are not allowed in mailnames or sitenames. They are allowed on either side of the @ sign although they can be left out. Upper and lower case letters are interchangeable everywhere within an address.

When you register for the UNIX service, a mailname will be set up for you and will be printed on the sheet of paper telling you your password.

Then you can tell your friends. An address in this form should be usable from most of the electronic mail networks in the world and can be added to your letterhead or business card.

Here are a few examples of addresses from elsewhere in the world. These are fictitious examples: do not try mailing to them!

```
Tony.Blair@house-of-commons.ac.uk
paint-workshop@ici.co.uk
ucgadkw@FRMTO81.earn
vanapp@rpi.edu
windows-support@microsoft.com
```
If you are in doubt about the form of an address you have been given, consult the IT Service Desk.

For long or complicated addresses, or for addresses that you use frequently, it will be worthwhile setting up a mail alias. See section 11.3.

4.2 The mailname command

If you are not sure whether a particular member of the University of Durham is registered for electronic mail, or you are not sure of his/her mailname, you can interrogate a directory of mailnames. This can be done using the UNIX command `mailname`.

1 First, ensure that you are at the UNIX prompt, and then type:

   `mailname thompson`

If you get a : prompt, then press the spacebar to get the next screenful. The `mailname` command will list information about all the registered mailnames that match the text given as a parameter. You should see something like:

   Alan.Thompson@durham.ac.uk  d1rv78  ST CUTHBERTS
   J.A.B.Thompson@durham.ac.uk  d206h2  HATFIELD
   J.L.Thompson@durham.ac.uk    dan6jlt  ANTHROPOLOGY
   T.V.Thompson@durham.ac.uk    dch3tvt  CHEMISTRY

The actual mailname is in the first column, and this is what you must use as the first component of the person's electronic mail address. The details in the second and third columns may help you to determine which is the mailname you want.

The second column contains the person's username. If the second character of the username is a digit, then the person is an undergraduate. For example, in the above list, J.A.B.Thompson and Alan.Thompson are the mailnames of two undergraduates. The last column shows the college of an undergraduate, or the department of a member of staff or postgraduate.

Note: the `mailname` command ignores the case of letters. Therefore, the same result will be obtained using a parameter of `thompson`, `Thompson` or THOMPSON. Also, it is unnecessary to type all of the characters of the surname: just the first few will do, e.g., `thomp`.

Use the `mailname` command to find your own mailname.

1 Type:

   `mailname name`

where `name` is your own last name. If your last name is the same as another person's name or matches the first part of it, you will see their mailnames too.
In the next section of these notes, you will send a message by electronic mail to a colleague. Use the `mailname` command once more to find the mailname of a Durham user to whom you would like to send a message.

### 4.3 Sending a message to a colleague

1. First, use the UNIX command:
   ```
   pine
   ```
   to re-enter Pine.

   You should already know the correct mailname of the person to whom you want to send your message. For a Durham user, you could have used the `mailname` command at the UNIX prompt (as described above). For a user at another site, you would have to find out their electronic mail address in some other way, such as by telephone or letter.

2. Start to compose your message as you did before (from the main menu, press the `C` key).

3. On the `To` line, type your colleague's electronic mail address.
   
   Take care that you type it correctly! Remember: addresses are not case-sensitive; so you can type it all in lower case letters if you wish. For a Durham user, you need to include `@durham.ac.uk` after the mailname.

   **Note:** if you wish to send a message to more than one user, you can type several addresses on the `To` line, each of which is separated by a comma.

4. Fill in the Subject line, move down underneath the `----- Message Text -----` line, and type in the body of your message.

5. When you have completed your message, have checked it, and are happy with it, press `Ctrl/X` followed by `Y` to send it.

   You could go on to send more messages, or read any that have been sent to you, but we will leave Pine for a moment.

6. Press the `Q` key, followed by the `Y` key.

### 5. Looking at incoming messages

For you to carry out this section, you will need to have received at least one message. If you are following this tutorial as part of an ITS course, your course tutor will have ensured that you have been sent at least one message. If you are not on a course, then you should ask a colleague to send you a message before you start this section.

1. From the UNIX prompt, start up Pine as you did before.
As you enter Pine, a line at the bottom of the screen will tell you how many messages are in your INBOX folder, for example:

[Folder "INBOX" opened with 1 message]

The main menu is displayed. One of the available commands is the I command, which will display an index of the messages that are in your INBOX folder.

2 Press the I key.

The index appears on the screen, with a new menu at the bottom of the screen.

The index contains one line for each message in your INBOX folder. Each line contains a status letter, a message number, the date the message was sent, who sent it, the number of characters in the message, and the subject of the message.

One of the lines of the index will be highlighted. This will be the line containing the first of the new messages if there are any, or the last message if there are no new messages. The down and up cursor-moving keys can be used to move the highlight to select a different message.

3 Use the up cursor-moving key to move the cursor up to the first message of the index. Then use the down cursor-moving key to move the cursor down to one of the new messages.

Note: the new (or unseen) messages are the messages marked with status letter N.

If new mail should arrive whilst you are using Pine, a line like:

[New mail! From David Simpson re Visit to Durham]

will appear at the bottom of the screen. If you have the mail index displayed, a line describing the new message will be added to the index.

Now you are going to look at one of your incoming messages.

4 Move the cursor to select the required message, and then press the V key.

[Note: you can press the Enter key instead of the V key if you wish.] The message will be displayed on your screen.

5 If the message has too many lines to fit on the screen, press the spacebar to display the next screenful of the message. Press the spacebar again if you are not at the end of the message.

6 To move back to a previous screenful of the message, press the minus key.
You can move to the next message listed in the index by the N key; and you can move to the previous message by the P key, and get the index re-displayed by the I key.

7 So get back to the index by pressing the I key.
Notice that the status letter N beside the entry in the index for the message you have just looked at has now disappeared. The message is no longer new.

8 Repeat the above procedure for any other incoming messages.

6. Processing your messages: either delete them or save them

6.1 Processing your messages
Whenever you receive a message, you should do some of the following:
- ignore it;
- just note the information contained in the message;
- reply to the message, or forward it to someone else;
- print the message.
You should then delete the message, or save it in a folder.

6.2 Deleting messages
To delete a message, first make sure the message is selected: either have the contents of the message displayed on the screen or have the message's entry in the index highlighted.

1 Then press the D key.
In the index, the message will be marked with the status letter D, and it will be deleted from your INBOX folder when you leave Pine. If you change your mind in the meantime (i.e., before you issue the Q command), you can select the message and press the U key to un-delete the message.

6.3 Saving messages in a folder
If you want to keep a message, you can save it in a folder. To do this, first select the message, and then press the S key. Pine will ask you for the name of the folder in which you would like the message to be saved.

At this point, you need to decide whether you would like to keep all your messages in one place (in the saved-messages folder), or in several places depending on their content, who sent them, or whatever. This is a matter of personal preference.

At the prompt that starts SAVE to folder, you have three choices:
- You can press the Enter key, in which case Pine will save the message in the saved-messages folder.
• You can type in the name of the folder, for example, project-x, and Pine will save the message in a folder of this name. If the folder does not exist, Pine will confirm with you that you want it to create a new folder with this name.

• You can press Ctrl/T to see a list of the folders that you currently have.

After you have saved a message it will be marked with the status letter D in the index, and it will be deleted from your INBOX folder when you leave Pine. If you change your mind in the meantime (i.e., before you issue Pine's Q command), you can select the message and press the U key to un-delete the message.

6.4 Keeping your inbox empty

Your inbox folder is not intended as a medium for the long-term storage of messages. It is expected that you will regularly read the contents of your inbox and that you will either save each message into one of your email folders or delete it.

In order to keep inboxes to a reasonable size, we remove any 'old' messages from an inbox. To be more specific: currently, once a week, we will remove from each inbox any messages that are more than 30 days old. We currently only do this if the inbox is bigger than 1 000 000 characters. You should not allow your inbox to contain any 'old' messages just in case a very big message arrives just before we process your inbox.

You can check the size of your inbox by typing the following command at the UNIX prompt:

```
mailsize
```

7. Replying to and forwarding messages

7.1 Replying to a message

Now you are going to reply to one of your messages.

1. First select one of your incoming messages.

2. Then press R to indicate that you wish to reply to the message.

Pine will ask you whether you want to include the text of the original message as part of your reply. This is often a useful thing to do.

3. Press the Y key, so that you will see what happens if you do this.

If the original message was sent to people other than yourself, Pine will then ask you whether you want your reply to be sent to all the original recipients of the message. If you press the Y key, all the original recipients will get your reply. If you press the N key, then only the sender of the message will get your reply.

4. Press either the Y key, or the N key.
You then will see a screen like the one you had when you composed a message, except that this time the To and Subject lines are filled in already. Pine has constructed these from the original message.

The cursor should be positioned below the

```
----- Message Text -----
```

line. Note that the original message has been included in the body of the message.

5 Type in the text of your reply.

Check the message, especially the To line. Pine should have filled it in correctly, but you should still check it.

6 If you are happy with your reply, tell Pine to send the message by pressing Ctrl/X followed by the Y key.

7.2 Forwarding messages

The forward command allows you to send a message that you have received on to someone else.

1 Select one of your messages, and then press F (for forward).

You will then see a screen containing a message. It includes a new set of headers, some of which have been completed. It also contains the whole of the original message, complete with its headers, together with some extra text explaining that this is a forwarded message.

2 Fill in the To line at the top of the screen, and, after the header lines, add any extra text of your own that you wish, such as:

```
I thought you might like to see this.
```

Note that you can change any part of the message you like, but you should not normally remove the lines which indicate which part is forwarded or where the original came from.

3 When you have completed your message, press Ctrl/X followed by Y in order to send it.

8. Printing a message

8.1 Printing a message on the UNIX service

You may want to output a message to a networked printer. In order to do this, you should have previously informed UNIX of which printer you want to use.

1 Return to UNIX by pressing the Q key, followed by the Y key.

2 At the UNIX prompt, type the command:
setenv LPDEST printername

where *printername* is replaced by the name of the printer that you wish to use, for example, *dcc1, lasercc1* or *durhp1*.

3. Now, re-enter Pine, and then make sure that the message that you want to be printed is selected.

4. Then press the Y key.

5. Pine will ask you to confirm this: so press the Y key again.

The message will then be sent to the printer.

8.2 Printing a message on a personal computer

If you are using a PC which has a printer attached, you can configure Pine so that messages are printed on that printer, rather than on one connected to the UNIX service. To do this, use the following instructions:

1. Display the Pine Main Menu (this is the menu which appears when you first start Pine). If you are already in Pine, press M, to display the menu.

2. Press S to select Setup.

3. Press P to select Printer.

4. Press 1 (the digit) to choose Printer attached to IBM PC or compatible, Macintosh

5. Press Enter.

Pine is now configured to use your PC's printer whenever you want to print a message. To do this:

6. Select the message, press Y, and then press Y again.

9. Other points about composing a message

9.1 Cancelling a message

If, whilst you are composing a message, you change your mind - you no longer want to send the message - press Ctrl/C followed by the Y key.

9.2 Postponing a message

You may want to postpone the completion of the composition (or the sending) of a message. You can do this by pressing Ctrl/O. When you next press C to compose a message, you will be asked whether you want to resume the composition of the postponed message.

**Note:** you can postpone as many messages as you wish.
9.3 Inserting a file as part of the message being composed

When composing a message, you may want to insert into your message the contents of a file that has been previously prepared. This file may have created by using an editor, such as the Pico editor, or it may have been created by some other means.

1. In order to do this, you should first position the cursor in the body of the message, on the line where you want to insert the text from your pre-prepared file.

The text will be inserted before this line.

2. Then press the Ctrl/R key.

Pine will output the prompt:

File to insert from home directory:

and you then have to type in the filename of the file that is to be read in. It is assumed that this file is in the current directory. If the file is in another directory, you will have to type in a pathname for the file, or use the file browsing facilities (see section 9.4).

If you make a mistake when typing the filename, use a combination of the left cursor-moving key and Ctrl/D to correct the characters.

3. When you have got the name of the file right, press the Enter key.

The contents of the file will be inserted into your message. Complete your message, and send it in the usual way.

In this way, it is possible to use electronic mail to send a file to another user. If you are able to use a proper file transfer mechanism, then it would be better to do so, but electronic mail is sometimes the only available means.

No message that you send should be longer than 100 thousand characters (bytes) or it is liable to be truncated on its way. If you wish to send a file that is larger than this limit, you must split the file, and send the separate parts by different messages. The messages may arrive out of order so they must be clearly marked. The Subject line is good for this.

Only text files can be transferred in this way. Even for text files, there is a possibility that some of the more obscure characters may be transformed in transmission. If your recipient complains that some of the characters of your messages seem to be incorrect, you should send a small test message to him/her.

9.4 File browsing facilities

The file browser is offered as an option in the command for reading from a file (Ctrl/R). It is intended to help in searching for specific files, and for navigating directory hierarchies. Having pressed Ctrl/R, the file browser is entered by following this key with Ctrl/T.
The file browser presents a list of each of the files in the current directory. Each file is accompanied by its size (in bytes) or by the characters (dir) if in fact the file is a directory. The name of the current directory is displayed on the top line of the screen, while a list of the file browser commands takes up the bottom two lines.

You can use the cursor-moving keys to move around this list of files. You can move to a subdirectory by pressing the Enter key whilst a subdirectory is highlighted. If you press the Enter key or the S key whilst a file is highlighted, the file will be selected.

9.5 A few guidelines for electronic mail messages

Once you get into the habit of using electronic mail, you will find that composing, sending and forwarding messages is very easy. It is also easy for quickly composed, and perhaps ill-considered, messages to people you might not know very well to be misunderstood. It is as well to bear in mind, therefore the following guidelines when using electronic mail.

- Be clear, brief and logical - and use descriptive titles in the subject line. A well-organised, to-the-point message is more inviting to the overwhelmed reader than five screens full of single-spaced text. It's best to stick to one topic per message.
- Never forget that the person on the other side is human. Never send anything when you are angry or upset. If you are upset at something or someone, wait until you have had a chance to calm down and think about it.
- Be careful what you say about others. Think twice before you post personal information about yourself or others.
- Be careful with humour and sarcasm. It is easy to misinterpret a message without the voice inflections and body language of one-to-one communication. If you are in doubt about a message that you have received, check back. Was that silly message a joke, or did you misunderstand it?
- Do not rely on the privacy of electronic mail. Mail will not normally be seen by other people, but electronic mail is not suitable for confidential information.

9.6 Checking the spelling of a message

During the composition of a message, you can ask Pine to check whether the words of your message are correctly spelled. You can do this by pressing Ctrl/T.

Pine will highlight each word whose spelling it is worried about. It will then ask you whether you want to change the spelling. Either press the Enter key if you are happy with the spelling or correct the spelling of the word before pressing the Enter key.
Unless told otherwise, Pine uses a dictionary of American English in order to check the spellings. If you type the following UNIX command before entering Pine:

```
setenv SPELL "spell -b"
```

Pine will use a more British form of English.

10. Using attachments

10.1 Attaching a file to a message

Sometimes you may want to send a message that does not just consist of lines of text. For example, you may want to send a Word document. In this case the complete document must be transferred by ‘attaching’ it to a message. First, transfer the Word document from your PC to UNIX using Rapid Filer.

From Pine’s main menu:

1. Press the C key.
2. Fill in the To: line with the email address of the recipient.
3. Move the cursor to the Attachmnt: line.
4. Press Ctrl/J.
5. Press Ctrl/T.
6. Use the cursor keys to highlight the name of the file containing the Word document.
7. Press the Enter key.
8. When asked for a comment, either type in a few words or just press the Enter key.
9. Fill in the rest of the header and write an explanatory message saying that a document file is attached to this message.
10. Press Ctrl/X to send the message.
11. Press the Y key.

Pine sends the attachment as a MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) attachment. MIME allows word-processed documents, spreadsheets, programs, images, audio and other binary data to be attached to a message, as long as they are not too large (i.e. less than 100,000 bytes).

If you need to send attached binary data to colleagues at other institutions, you should make sure that the person receiving the message has a mail program that is capable of receiving MIME attachments and detaching them from a message.
10.2 Detaching an attachment from a message

If you receive a message with an attachment, the message will indicate this in the Parts/attachments: line.

To save an attachment to a UNIX file:

1. Press the V key (to view the attachment).
2. Use the cursor key to highlight the attachment (usually part 2).
3. Press the S key.
4. Give the file a name (or use the default given).
5. Use Rapid Filer to transfer the file to a PC.

11. Other features of Pine

11.1 Saving a message in a file

If you want to keep messages so that you can access them again in a future Pine session, you should use the S command (see Section 6.3). However, there may be occasions when you want to store a message in a file so that you can edit it, include parts of it in another document, and so on. This is done using the export command.

1. First, make sure that the message is selected.
2. Then press the E key. (The export command may not be visible on the menu bar, but it is available to you at this point. You could press O to see the other commands.)

Pine will then ask you to type a filename.

3. Type in a filename. If the file is in another directory, you will have to type in a pathname for the file. If you make a mistake when typing the filename, use a combination of the left cursor-moving key and Ctrl/D to correct the characters.
4. When you have got the name of the file right, press the Enter key.

If the file you specify does not already exist, Pine will create the file for you and copy the message into the file. If it does exist, Pine asks you whether you want to overwrite the file with the current message, or to append the current message to the end of the file. Press either the O key or the A key. Note that if you press the A key, you can finish up with many messages stored in one file.

11.2 Looking at other folders

All users of Pine have at least three folders: INBOX, sent-mail and saved-messages. If you have chosen to save messages in other folders (see Section 6.3), then you will have other folders besides these three.
If you want to look at the messages in a folder other than the INBOX folder, you should press the L key. Pine will display a list of the names of all your folders. You can view any of these folders by using the cursor-moving keys to highlight the desired folder and then pressing the Enter key or the V key.

11.3 Personal aliases

An *alias* is a way of setting up a short name that you can use when typing the electronic mail address of a recipient of a message. Aliases are particularly useful if you have colleagues at remote sites where the address may involve an unmemorable mailname and/or sitename.

We now look at the steps that need to be taken if you want to create an alias.

1. First, make sure that you are in Pine's main menu: you may need to type the M key in order to get there.

2. Now press the A key.

Pine now presents a new screen to you: this is your *address book*. You currently have no entries in your address book, so Pine says

[Empty]

You will see, at the bottom of the screen, that there are a number of commands that can be used whilst you in the address book. One of these is the *AddNew* command that can be used to add a new alias.

3. So press the A key.

Pine will display a new screen. It requires you to type several pieces of information about the person for whom you wish to set up an alias. You have to type each of these in turn, following each one with the Enter key.

First, Pine is asking you for a *nickname*, a short name for the person.

4. Type:

        danny

5. and press the Enter key.

Then, Pine would like the *fullname* of the person.

6. Type:

        Simpson, Danny

You can leave the Fcc and Comment lines empty. Use the Enter key to get down to the Addresses line. Here Pine is asking you for the electronic mail address of the person.

7. Now type:

        D.J.Simpson@neighbours.channel7.au
8 Press Ctrl/X followed by the Y key.

Pine now stores this information away. It makes danny a nickname for the electronic mail address D.J.Simpson@neighbours.channel7.au, and this means that you can just type in danny whenever you are on the To line of a message, instead of having to type in Danny’s electronic mail address.

**Note:** the name that you use for a nickname may only contain letters, digits, and some of the punctuation characters (such as dots and hyphens). It may not contain a space.

Pine stores the alias information in a file called .addressbook in your home directory. Although this file is an ordinary text file, it is best if you only alter it from within Pine. Pine also creates a file called .addressbook.lu which makes its search for alias information faster.

9 After you have used the address book, use the M key to return to the main menu.

11.4 **The .pinerc file**

Pine is a flexible program, capable of working in many different ways. If you want to change some aspect of the way in which it works, you should go to the Setup Configuration screen. This screen can be reached from the main menu by pressing the S key followed by the C key. Unless you understand what you are doing, it may be best not to alter any of these settings.

The current values of the settings are stored in a file called .pinerc which is in your home directory. This file will be created for you when you first use Pine. Unless you are certain that you really understand what you are doing, you should not alter the contents of this file. If you do alter it, you will change the way Pine works, and you may prevent it working properly.

12. **Other points about electronic mail**

12.1 **Junk mail and chain letters**

Most people are annoyed by the great amounts of junk mail that we receive through the post. Increasingly, these days electronic mail is being used to send out junk mail. Just delete these messages, and

- Do not, yourself, use electronic mail to do mailshots to a large number of people.
- Don’t get involved with chain letters: once again, just delete any chain letters that you receive.

12.2 **Privacy and fabrication**

Do not assume that messages sent by electronic mail are private. Messages will not normally be seen by other people, but electronic mail is not suitable for confidential information.
You should also be aware that it is possible for people to send messages in other people’s names. It contravenes the University regulations for you to do this. However, if you receive a message from someone, and the message seems strange or out of character, maybe it is not really from that person. If you suspect that this has happened, phone them or fax them or e-mail them to check that they really did send the message. If you receive a bogus message, report the incident to the IT Service Desk.

13. **What to do if things go wrong**

Most of the time, electronic mail works without trouble. Sometimes things do go wrong, and because mail is delivered by cooperation between several parties, it is not always clear where the problem lies.

This section describes the most common problems and what you might do about them.

13.1 **Multiple Pine sessions**

If you have two different UNIX sessions at the same time, on different terminals or in different windows on a workstation, you might start up Pine more than once.

If you do this, the earlier sessions of Pine will operate in a *readonly* mode. So you will not be able to alter your folders in the earlier sessions. It will tell you that it is doing this.

It is less confusing if you only have one Pine session at any one time. If you accidentally start up another Pine session, it is best to leave both sessions, and then start up Pine again.

13.2 **Failures from other sites**

Electronic mail messages are normally delivered within minutes or a few hours. If you get no response to a message, it has either been delivered and ignored, or it has vanished somewhere. It is not easy to distinguish between these possibilities! When you are sending your first message to someone, it is often useful to add a sentence to your message asking them to confirm that they have received it.

If it is not possible for one of your messages to be delivered, you will usually get a message back saying what went wrong. These messages are often rather cryptic, but they always contain useful information. Try to determine who generated the message, and whether it is the mailname or the sitename that has lead to the failure. If the problem is with the mailname, send a message to `postmaster@sitename` to ask what is wrong with the mailname.

If the sitename is wrong, try contacting the IT Service Desk to see whether we can help.
13.3 **Not registered to send mail**

It is possible that a message from you will be returned marked:

You are not registered to send mail off campus

or

Remote protocol error

This would happen if the mail hub computer is unable to find the mailname with which to sign your message. The solution is simple: see the IT Service Desk and register a mailname.

A mailname is associated with a mailbox, known as the primary mailbox. Messages coming into Durham to your mailname will always be delivered to your primary mailbox. You will automatically be able to send mail from any computer from which you can read your mailbox. However, if you want to send mail from a computer that cannot access your mailbox, you need to register a secondary mailbox. See the IT Service Desk in order to register a secondary mailbox.

13.4 **Refreshing the screen**

If someone or some other program writes text on to your screen, you can ask Pine to refresh the screen by pressing Ctrl/L. It is never harmful to press Ctrl/L when using Pine.

13.5 **No response from Pine**

If you find you are getting no response from Pine when you press any key, it may be that you have inadvertently pressed Ctrl/S. This stops the sending of subsequent keys until you press Ctrl/Q. If you think this has happened, press Ctrl/Q. It is never harmful to press Ctrl/Q when using Pine.

14. **Further information**

14.1 **On-line help**

Pine has its own comprehensive on-line help facility. From within Pine, just press the appropriate key from those listed at the bottom of the screen - the key is either ? or Ctrl/G.

14.2 **Other documentation**

There is also a manual page for Pine that can be displayed on the screen by typing the UNIX command:

    man pine
14.3 Getting help about electronic mail from the IT Service Desk

If you want help about Pine (or any other computing topic), you can either go to the IT Service Desk, ring the helpline (internal 41515), or send a message by electronic mail to the address itservicedesk@durham.ac.uk. Messages to this address are normally read during the working day that they are received and so you can expect a response within 24 hours.

14.4 The address postmaster@durham.ac.uk

The address postmaster@durham.ac.uk can be used for questions when a message you have sent has been returned to you because it cannot be delivered. Questions about using Pine should not be sent to the postmaster - see the previous section.

If you ask postmaster for help, please give as much information as possible. Forward a copy of any message that is causing difficulty together with the response you get from sending it.