# How to Create a Rule to Block Out-of-Office Messages

Many email clients provide options to create rules that filter messages before they reach your inbox. If you receive unwanted out-of-office messages from State Bar e-lists, you can set up an email rule to manage them.

#### **Considerations Before Creating a Rule**

- If you rarely post or respond to a particular e-list, you may not need a rule.
- If you belong to a small e-list used for timely projects (such as board or committee e-lists), you may want to receive out-of-office messages.
- If the phrase "out of office" appears in valid subject lines, you should refine your rule criteria.

There is a wide variety of email software that is used by our members. To provide an *example* of the logic one may use to create a rule, we present the following Microsoft Outlook settings for blocking the out-of-office messages that are generated by individual State Bar e-lists. It is important to note that the actual *settings* for creating rules for all other email clients, such as Gmail or Outlook Web, will be different. While this will not stop *all* Out of Office messages, it should stop *most* of them.

## Creating a Rule in Microsoft Outlook (Microsoft 365, Outlook 2019/2021)

#### Steps to Filter Out-of-Office Messages:

1. Open Outlook and go to File > Manage Rules & Alerts.



#### 2. Click New Rule.

Rules and Alerts	×
Email Rules Manage Alerts	
Run Rule Change Rule - E Copy ➤ Delete A T Run Rules Now Options	
Rule (applied in the order shown) Actions	
Select the "New Rule" button to make a rule.	
	•

3. Under **Start from a blank rule**, select **Apply rule on messages I receive** and click **Next**.

Rules Wizard		×
Start from a templa Step 1: Select a ten	ate or from a blank rule nplate	
Stay Organized		
Move mess	ages from someone to a folder	
Move mess	ages with specific words in the subject to a folder	
Move mess	ages sent to a public group to a folder	
Flag messa	ges from someone for follow-up	
Move RSS	items from a specific RSS Feed to a folder	
Stay Up to Date	il fanns annan an in tha Narra Narra Mark Mindaus	
C Display ma	il from someone in the New Item Alert Window	
Send an al	ert to my mobile device when I get messages from some	one
Start from a blan	k rule	one
🖂 Apply rule	on messages I receive	
Apply rule	on messages I send	
Step 2: Edit the rul	e description (click an underlined value)	
Apply this rule af	ter the message arrives	
	Cancel < Back Next > Fin	ISN

4. In Step 1: Select condition(s), check with specific words in the subject and from people or public group.

from peo	ple or public group	
through t	the specified account	
sent only	to me	
where my	name is in the To box	
marked a	s importance	
marked a	s <u>sensitivity</u>	
flagged f	or <u>action</u>	
where my	name is in the Cc box	
where my	name is in the To or Cc box	
where my	name is not in the lo box	
with cost	rific words in the body	
with spec	fic words in the subject or body	
with spec	fic words in the message header	
with spec	ific words in the recipient's address	
with spec	ific words in the sender's address	
assigned	to <u>category</u> category	
tep 2: Edit ti	he rule description (click an underlined value)	
Apply this r	ule after the message arrives	
from people	a or public group	
and with s	pecific words in the subject	

- 5. In Step 2: Edit the rule description, click specific words, then add:
  - o "Out of Office"
  - o "Automatic Reply"
  - Any other common out-of-office phrases Click **Add**, then **OK**.

Search Text		×
Specify words or phrases to search for in the	subject:	
		Add
Search list:		
"Out of Office" or "Automatic Reply"		
		Remove
	ОК	Cancel

6. Click **people or public group**, enter the e-list email addresses (e.g., famlaw@elists.wisbar.org, yld@elists.wisbar.org), and click **OK**.

Rule Address	×
Search:     O All columns     Name only     Address Book:       →     ×     Contacts     ✓   Advanced Find	
4	
From famlaw@elists.wisbar.org	OK Cancel

7. Click Next, then in Step 1: Select action(s), choose Move the message to a specified folder (e.g., Deleted Items or a custom folder).

What do you wan	to do with the me	issage?		
Step 1: Select acti	on(s)	<u> </u>		
🖌 move it to the	specified folder	)		
assign it to th	e <u>category</u> categor	Y		
delete it				
permanently of	lelete it			
move a copy	to the <u>specified</u> fol	der		
forward it to j	people or public gi	roup		
forward it to j	people or public gi	roup as an atta	ichment	
have converted	reopre or public gr	oup		
reply using a	piy using <u>a specifi</u> specific templete	<u>c message</u>		
flag mossage	for follow up at the	is time		
clear the Mes	sage Flag	is une		
clear message	e's categories			
mark it as imr	ortance			
print it				
play <u>a sound</u>				
mark it as rea	d			
stop processi	ng more rules			
Step 2: Edit the ru Apply this rule a	le description (clicl fter the message a	k an underlined rrives	i value)	
from famlaw@e	ists.wisbar.org			
and with <u>'Out c</u>	of Office' or 'Autom	atic Reply in t	he subject	
move it to the s	pecified folder			
	Cancel	< Back	Next >	Finish

- 8. Click **Next** and review any exceptions if needed.
- 9. Name the rule (e.g., "Block Out-of-Office Messages"), check **Turn on this rule**, and click **Finish**.

Finish rule setup.
Step 1: Specify a name for this rule
Block Out-of-Office Messages
Step 2: Setup rule options
Run this rule now on messages already in "Inbox"
✓ Turn on this rule
Create this rule on all accounts
Step 3: Review rule description (click an underlined value to edit)
Apply this rule after the message arrives from <u>famlaw@elists.wisbar.org</u> and with <u>'Out of Office' or 'Automatic Reply'</u> in the subject
move it to the <u>Archive</u> folder
Cancel < Back Next > Finish

## Creating a Rule in Outlook Web (Microsoft 365 Web Version)

- 1. Open **Outlook Web** and go to **Settings > View all Outlook settings**.
- 2. Navigate to Mail > Rules.
- 3. Click Add a new rule and name it (e.g., "Filter Out-of-Office Messages").
- 4. Under Add a condition, select Subject includes and enter:
  - "Out of Office"
  - "Automatic Reply"
- 5. Under **Add an action**, select **Move to** and choose **Deleted Items** (or another folder).
- 6. Click Save.

## **Setting Up Filters in Gmail**

- 1. Open **Gmail** and click on the settings gear, then select **See all settings**.
- 2. Navigate to the Filters and Blocked Addresses tab.
- 3. Click Create a new filter.
- 4. In the **Subject** field, enter:
  - o "Out of Office"
  - "Automatic Reply"
- 5. Click Create filter and select Delete it (or another preferred action).
- 6. Click Create filter again.

#### **Final Notes**

- These rules will not block all out-of-office messages but should filter most of them.
- Keep your rules updated if e-list email addresses or common phrases change.
- If you use a different email client, refer to its support documentation for similar filtering options.