

send email using command line

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10 Replies [Latest reply](#): Feb 5, 2007 5:25 PM by David_x



Level 1
(115 points)

costicladop

Feb 4, 2007 12:19 PM

Hi all,

I was looking for a command to send emails but couldn't find proper setup to do so. What I'm trying to achieve is to be able to send emails from a workstation using command line. I do not run any mail server so i will have to use my ISP email servers.

Can somebody provide some help on how to do this?

MacBook Pro; iMac G5, Mac OS X (10.4.8)

[I have this question too \(0\)](#)

[Reply by Camelot on Feb 4, 2007 1:00 PM](#)

Helpful

Firstly, when sending mail, *mail* will use the local mail server, so you're going to need to enable mail on your machine no matter what.

Don't worry, it's not a big deal. You don't need to setup your server to handle incoming mail from the network, deal with mail clients, POP, IMAP, etc., just enable the outgoing mail server so that you can send mail.

So, in Server Admin, enable outgoing mail and add your ISP's mail server as the relay server (this is the server it will send all non-local mail to).

Once you've done that you can simply use *mail* at the command line via *mail user@domain.com*, like:

```
<pre class=command>localhost $ mail user@domain.com
Subject: This is a test
```

This is only a test. If this were a real email it might have been worth reading.</pre>

In this example I invoked *mail user@domain.com*. *mail* prompted me for the Subject line, after which I typed in the message. Use Ctrl-D on a blank line to signify the end of the message.

You can also specify the subject line when you invoke mail, using the *-s* switch, in which case *mail* doesn't prompt you for the Subject line:

```
<pre class=command>mail -s "this is the subject" user@domain.com</pre>
```

Finally, if you're trying to capture output from another shell command you can pipe the message into mail:

```
<pre class=command>cat /path/to/some/file | mail -s "here's the subject" user@domain.com</pre>
```

Note, though, that the output of the shell command will become the message body – you can't just attach files in this way since they need to be MIME-encoded to get through the mail system.

[See the answer in context](#)

[Reply by David_x on Feb 4, 2007 2:11 PM](#)

Helpful

I may be wrong but I think there is a mail daemon running in OS X clients? Open terminal and try one of Camelot's examples. Then open Console and look in */var/log/mail.log* to see if anything took place.

Your next problem will be setting the relay variable, from address, etc.

See 'man mail' for more info.

-david

[See the answer in context](#)

All replies



Level 8
(46,450 points)

Camelot

Feb 4, 2007 1:00 PM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to costicladop

Helpful

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[his helped me \(1\)](#)



Level 1
(115 points)

costicladop

Feb 4, 2007 1:44 PM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to Camelot

Camelot,

Thank you for your answer.

I do not have any mail server at all and Server Admin accepts only connections to MacOS X server. Is it still possible to setup this on a MacOS X 10.4 workstation?

[his helped me \(0\)](#)



Level 4

David_x

Feb 4, 2007 2:11 PM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to costicladop

Helpful

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(3,010 points)

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Your next problem will be setting the relay variable, from address, etc.

See 'man mail' for more info.

—david

[his helped me \(1\)](#)



Level 1
(115 points)

costicladop

Feb 4, 2007 3:04 PM

Re: [send email using command line](#)

in response to David_x

when i try this:

`mail -s test_terminal myemailaddress`

i get the email but mail.log shows following entries

```
Feb 4 17:50:21 iMacG5 postfix/master[1203]: daemon started -- version 2.1.5
Feb 4 17:50:22 iMacG5 postfix/pickup[1204]: C528054663D: uid=501 from=<local_username>
Feb 4 17:50:22 iMacG5 postfix/cleanup[1205]: C528054663D: message-id=<20070204225021.C528054663D@iMacG5.local>
Feb 4 17:50:23 iMacG5 postfix/qmgr[1207]: 32F30546609: from=<local_username@iMacG5.local>, size=336, nrcpt=1 (queue active)
Feb 4 17:50:23 iMacG5 postfix/qmgr[1207]: 32F30546609: removed
Feb 4 17:50:23 iMacG5 postfix/qmgr[1207]: 48552546502: from=<local_username@iMacG5.local>, size=315, nrcpt=1 (queue active)
Feb 4 17:50:23 iMacG5 postfix/qmgr[1207]: C528054663D: from=<local_username@iMacG5.local>, size=336, nrcpt=1 (queue active)
Feb 4 17:50:53 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1209]: connect to mx1.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s]: Operation timed out (port 25)
Feb 4 17:50:53 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: connect to mx1.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s]: Operation timed out (port 25)
Feb 4 17:51:21 iMacG5 postfix/master[1203]: master exit time has arrived
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1209]: connect to mx1.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s]: Operation timed out (port 25)
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: connect to mx1.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s]: Operation timed out (port 25)
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: warning: 48552546502: trace service failure
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: warning: 48552546502: defer service failure
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: 48552546502: to=<myemailaddress>, relay=mx2.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s2], delay=1213, status=deferred (48552546502: trace service failed)
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: warning: 48552546502: trace service failure
Feb 4 17:51:23 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1208]: warning: 48552546502: trace service failure
Feb 4 17:51:53 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1209]: connect to mx2.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s2]: Operation timed out (port 25)
Feb 4 17:51:53 iMacG5 postfix/smtp[1209]: C528054663D: to=<myemailaddress>, relay=mx2.myISP.com[IP.add.res.s], delay=92, status=sent (250 ok dirdel)
```

I was really surprised to get the email since my ISP requires authentication to send emails and it's using port 587.

[his helped me \(0\)](#)



Level 8
(46,450 points)

Camelot

Feb 4, 2007 8:04 PM

Re: [send email using command line](#)

in response to costicladop

>I do not have any mail server at all and Server Admin accepts only connections to MacOS X server. Is it still possible to setup this on a MacOS X 10.4 workstation?

Since you posted in the Mac OS X Server forum I assumed you were running Mac OS X Server... oh well. The same mail server processes are installed, but you don't get a GUI to configure them.

>I was really surprised to get the email since my ISP requires authentication to send emails and it's using port 587.

I'm not surprised at all. As far as your ISP is concerned, this could be any mail coming in from anywhere for you – you'd expect them to accept the message if it was coming from any other domain, and at the moment this is no different.

You will likely have problems, however, if you don't configure your mail server to relay messages and you try to email other domains. Your ISP probably trust you because you have an IP address in their space, but other ISPs won't be so generous.

[his helped me \(0\)](#)

Level 4
(3,010 points)

David_x

Feb 5, 2007 2:07 AM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to costicladop

I had a quick look at 'mail' command (man page) and could not see a way to enter a relay server (your ISP) in the config file (however might be some way if you read elsewhere about it). Note from the logs that the mail daemon is looking up the MX record for recipient so, as Camelot says, you will likely be blocked by other servers since you will be exhibiting same characteristics as a spammer (no real HELO hostname, etc).

As an alternative, it may be worth looking at using Applescript with Mail app and then calling this from inside the script (using 'osascript').

–david

[his helped me \(0\)](#)

Level 1
(90 points)

gdiscenza

Feb 5, 2007 6:56 AM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to costicladop

One quick and dirty way I've heard of sending mail from the command line is using telnet.

Telnet to your ISP's SMTP server using port 25, then use standard SMTP commands to write the email you want to send. I don't remember the exact method offhand, but if you search for "HELO" or "EHLO" you should be able to find the instructions to do this.

Good luck!

–Gregg

[his helped me \(0\)](#)

Level 8
(46,450 points)

Camelot

Feb 5, 2007 10:38 AM

[Re: send email using command line](#)

in response to David_x

>I had a quick look at 'mail' command (man page) and could not see a way to enter a relay server (your ISP) in the config file

Simple – you don't.

The command line *mail* will take the message and submit it to the mail server *running on the local machine*.

That mail server's configuration will tell the mail server what to do with it (e.g. deliver it locally, send it directly to the destination domain's mail server, or relay it through another server). So what you're looking for is the relay configuration for postfix (the mail server).

Edit /etc/postfix/main.cf and edit (or add) the line:

```
<pre class=command>relayhost = mailserver.yourisp.net</pre>
```

(where 'mailserver.yourisp.net' is, of course, the address of your ISP's mail server that you want to relay through.

[his helped me \(0\)](#)



Level 1
(115 points)

costicladop

Feb 5, 2007 10:57 AM

Re: [send email using command line](#)
in response to Camelot

Camelot,

Thanks again for your time!

Made the suggested change and noticed that mail.log shows as email being delivered properly. Still, i did not receive it. After contacting our email admin, we found that from address has to be a real email address (or alias).

How do we change the "from address" to match an existing email address?

[his helped me \(0\)](#)

Level 4
(3,010 points)

David_x

Feb 5, 2007 5:25 PM

Re: [send email using command line](#)
in response to costicladop

Thanks Camelot, I hadn't really appreciated that it was postfix which was built into the clients. Pretty obvious I suppose thinking about it (as in so much of the server open-source stuff is actually in the client as well and vice-versa).

costicladop, the sender name appears to be the user name the command is run under. So if run as root then the sender name will be 'root'. The domain/hostname can be set using `myhostname = mydomain.com` in `/etc/postfix/main.cf`. You can also set a different 'Reply To:' address using the `~R` escape char in a line of the mail message (see 'man mail').

All fun stuff – and all going back how many decades since unix started?

–david

Server 10.4.8

[his helped me \(0\)](#)[Return to Mac OS X Server v10.4 and earlier](#)[Go to original post](#)

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