

# Downloading and Using Mozilla Thunderbird

By Brazos Price

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## What is Thunderbird? Why should I use it?

Thunderbird is the email client portion of Mozilla, an open-source suite of applications that can be downloaded for free over the Internet. Using a full-featured email client like Thunderbird offers several advantages that web-based mail interfaces like Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo mail, and UT Webmail cannot. Thunderbird allows a user to access and manage multiple email accounts simultaneously. For a student at the iSchool, this means that you can access your iSchool email, your utexas email, and even your email from work, all using the same program.

In addition to these features, Thunderbird is an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader that lets the user take advantage of RSS feeds, sites that distribute information using the RSS format. Downloading news and information directly to your inbox is quite easy; Thunderbird can access multiple websites that are updated on a frequent basis, including news sites and blogs (weblogs). Another facet of Thunderbird service encompasses the realm of Usenet (or Newsgroups), as Thunderbird can also access and manage multiple Newsgroup accounts.

Fortunately, the capabilities of this program do not stop with the above. Thunderbird also gives increased spam or junk mail controls. With this program, you can access government grade security features and the ability to easily parse large amounts of mail using customizable mail filtering. Thunderbird is less susceptible to email viruses than Outlook, or other commonly used mail programs.

Finally, Thunderbird offers extensibility and the ability to customize. You can customize the way the program looks, alter viewing areas, and add themes. Extensions are available to add to the Thunderbird experience. For example, you can add increased security by downloading an extension that allows for PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) keys or add a feature that incorporates a dictionary search within the mail client. New extensions are coming out every week, so the ability to expand and customize this program is limitless.

This tutorial assumes Thunderbird version 1.0 running on Windows XP but other operating systems and versions should look and act similar.

## Objectives of this Tutorial

1. Learn how to download Thunderbird and install it.
2. Learn how to navigate the Thunderbird interface.
3. Learn how to add email accounts to Thunderbird.
4. Learn how to use Thunderbird's RSS reader.
5. Learn how to setup and optimize Filters.
6. Learn how to setup and optimize Spam/Junk Mail detection.

## Downloading and Installing Thunderbird

First, make sure you are connected to the Internet. Open a browser and navigate to the Mozilla homepage, <http://www.mozilla.org>. You will notice that the Mozilla website offers many products, including Firefox (see our Firefox tutorial located at <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/technology/tutorials/internet/firefox/>), the Mozilla Browser, and others. A link to the Thunderbird Homepage is located on this page. Follow this link.

The Thunderbird homepage (<http://mozilla.org/thunderbird>) is where you will find links to download Thunderbird, as well as up-to-date information about the program (including bugs and new versions). The Thunderbird website should recognize your computer's operating system (this tutorial assumes Windows XP) and provide a link to download the appropriate version of Thunderbird on this page. If the version displayed on the website does not correspond to the operating system that you are using, follow the link that says **other systems and languages** and find the right version of Thunderbird for your operating system. Download the installer to your desktop.

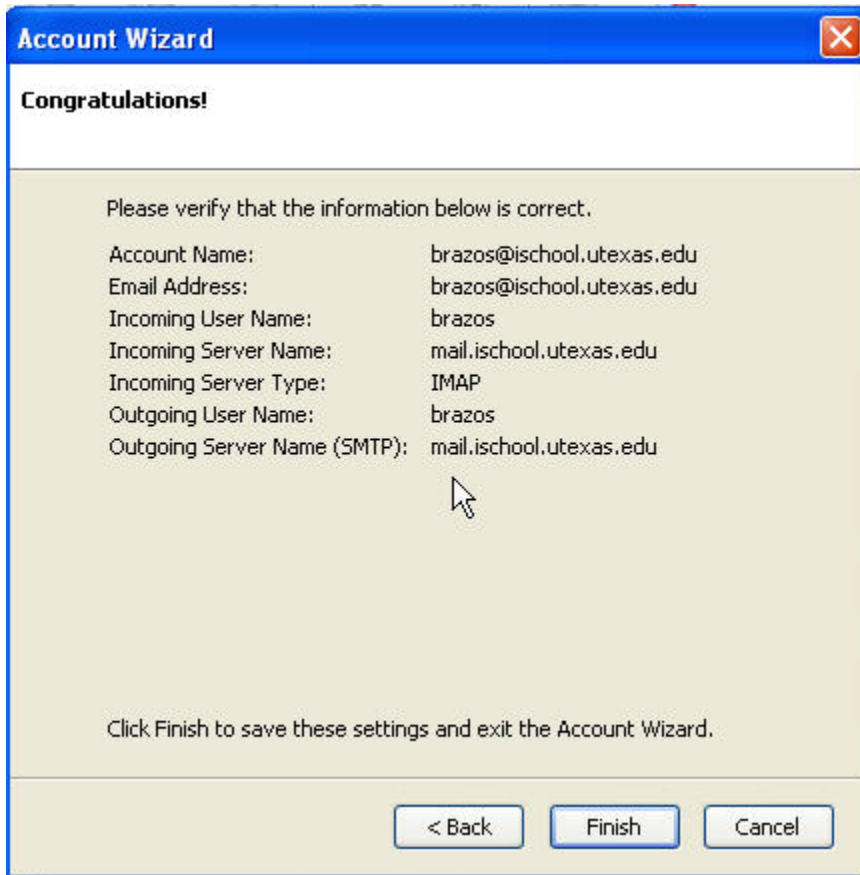
Once the Installer has finished downloading, double click the installer and the installation setup should begin. Read the software license agreement and, accept it to click the next button and continue the installation. Go ahead and choose the standard installation and click next. Click next one last time and the installation will begin; once this is completed, launch Thunderbird and you will be able to import information from other email clients. If you have been using another email client, now is the time to import your address book and other information. Importing mail information may take some time, so please be patient.

Otherwise, choose not to import any settings from other mail clients. Now you will be given the option to add accounts to Thunderbird.

Start off by selecting the button to add an email account, and then click next. Now you will be asked to enter your identity. Enter your name and your iSchool email address (your ischool username followed by "@ischool.utexas.edu") and click next.

Now you need to enter the server information. The iSchool uses an IMAP server; therefore you should select the IMAP button as the incoming server (IMAP offers several advantages over POP; if you are interested in specifics, please visit <http://www.imap.org/imap.vs.pop.brief.html>) and input "mail.ischool.utexas.edu" into both the incoming and outgoing server. If you are not using an iSchool account, be sure and ask your provider, as not all providers allow IMAP or use the same mail server for both incoming and outgoing servers. Now select the next button.

Now you must enter your username again. For iSchool students, this is your iSchool user name, the name that comes before the @ in your email address. For example, my email address is [brazos@ischool.utexas.edu](mailto:brazos@ischool.utexas.edu), and so my username is brazos. Not all email providers are set up this way, so be sure and ask your provider if you do not know your username. Choose the next button once more. Select a name for this account and choose next. You are almost ready to begin using Thunderbird; verify that all of the information is correct before continuing. If something needs to be changed, choose the back button until you have reached the area that needs to be fixed and alter it accordingly. Once everything has been entered, click the finish button.

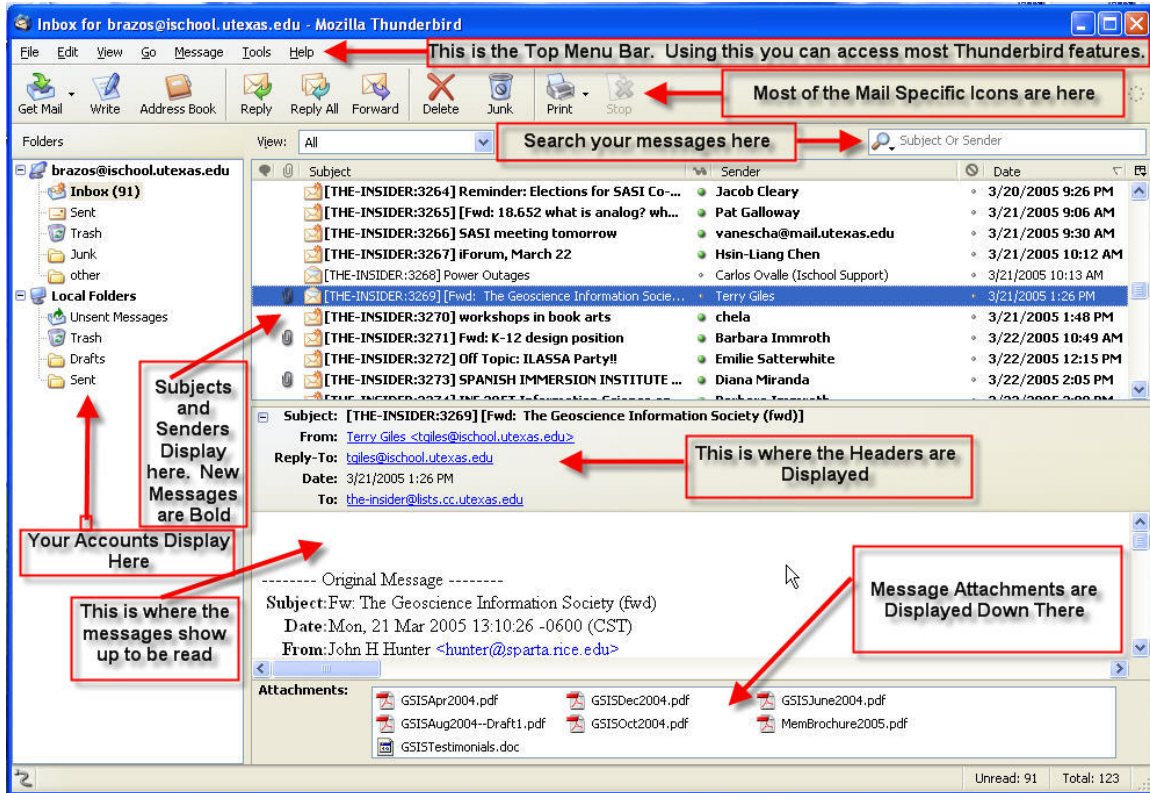


Now you are given the option to use Thunderbird as your default Mail client. This means that whenever you click a link on a web page that prompts an email, Thunderbird will open up automatically to send that email. Select the “do not display this dialog box again” button and choose yes or no. You will now be prompted to enter your password - do so and click ok.

## Navigating the Thunderbird Interface

At this point, if your server has mail on it (for the purposes of this example, your iSchool email account), your mailbox will be populated with messages. In Thunderbird, messages that are **bold** are unread and messages that are not bold have already been read.

Thunderbird's interface looks like this:



Now, let us send a test message to ourselves, to make sure that we have configured our mailbox properly. Click on the write button (between the get mail button on the left and the address book button on the right). In the **to:** field, type your "email address," in the **subject,** type "test message," and in the **message box,** type "test".

Click **send** and the message should close. If your account is configured correctly, when you click on the Get Mail button, your message will be delivered. If the message is not delivered, you will need to check your mail server settings again, to ensure you input the correct information.

With Thunderbird, there is no need to always type in the contact information when sending an email. The **Address Book** function allows you to collect all your contact information in one place.

Click on the Address button to work with your address book. Once in the Address Book click on **New Card** to insert contact information. Try it out using your own address. Input your first and last names in the appropriate fields, as well as your email address.

Compose another message. Click on the contacts button at the top of your screen. At this point, you should see your name on the left-hand side of the screen, under the personal contacts information. Also note that Thunderbird makes an automatic contact list for any individual that you have sent a message to. Therefore, when you respond to an email directed to you from someone you do not know, their email address will be added to your contact list. You can delete them by right clicking (control + click for Macs) on the name and selecting delete. Close the compose message box now; do not save the message.

## **Adding Accounts to Thunderbird**

Many of you may have multiple email accounts. Thunderbird makes it easy to bring many email accounts into the same email client. As iSchool students, you are eligible for both an iSchool email account, as well as a utexas account. To sign up for an iSchool account, go to <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/technology/tutorials/start/account/> or stop by the IT lab. To get a University of Texas (@mail.utexas.edu) email account, go to <http://www.utexas.edu/computer/email/>. Once you have another email account and want to add it to Thunderbird, you must go to the file menu, select new, and then account (File→New→Account).

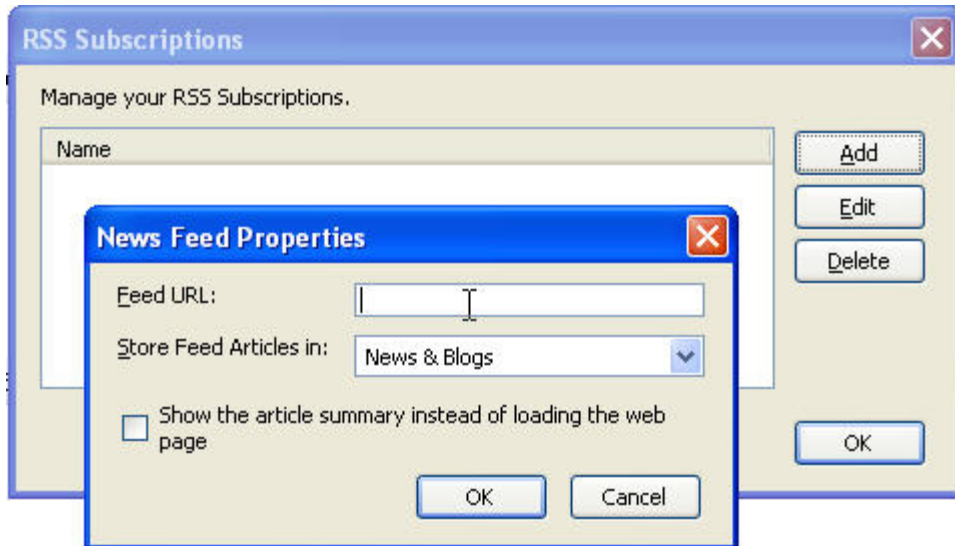
This brings up the account Wizard that was accessed the first time you launched Thunderbird. Notice that from here you may add accounts for Email, RSS News and Blogs, or Newsgroups. Choose to add an email account. This is done much like before. Input your name, email address, and email server (ie, mail.utexas.edu). The difference now is that it is not necessary to input an SMTP server; it uses your original account's server (mail.ischool.utexas.edu).

## **Adding an RSS feed for News or Blogs**

RSS or Really Simple Syndication is a way to “subscribe” to websites such as news or blogs. This portion of the tutorial will teach you how to use Thunderbird to subscribe to CNN Headlines, as well as the RSS feed from [www.brazos.indylibrarian.net/blog](http://www.brazos.indylibrarian.net/blog), my personal blog.

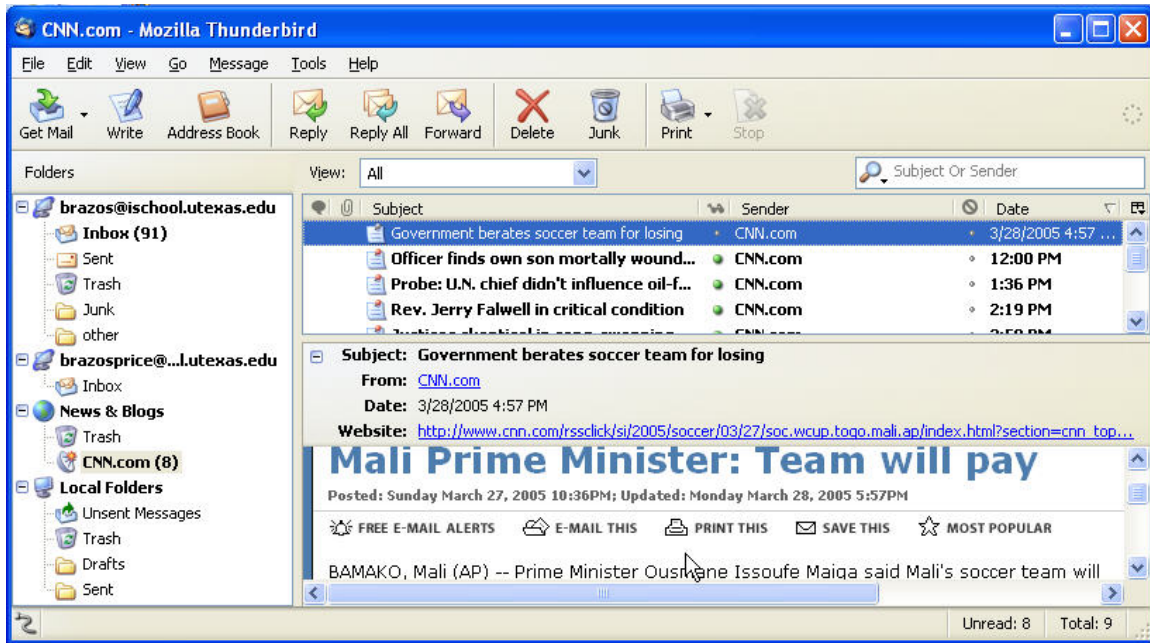
Thunderbird uses RSS to download information (in this case websites) directly to your email client. It periodically checks for new information from the RSS feed so whenever you go online, you do not need to visit the website in question in order to receive breaking news. The RSS reader also periodically checks for new information while you are online.

In order to add an RSS feed, go to File→New→Account and select RSS News and Blogs. Follow the prompts to name your new RSS account. Once the account has been created, select it on the Thunderbird Sidebar and right click (control + click for Macs). Then select the option to **Manage subscriptions** and the manage subscriptions frame is opened. Use this interface to add a new news/blog subscription.



In this first example, we will be subscribing to the CNN news website.

Open up a web browser. Type in the CNN address, [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com). Most websites have their RSS feed somewhere on the main page. Look for the CNN RSS feed. It is located at the bottom of the main page next to an orange XML box and says, “Add RSS headlines.” Follow this link. This page gives you some information about RSS feeds and RSS. Now select the Top Stories link ([http://rss.cnn.com/rss/cnn\\_topstories.rss](http://rss.cnn.com/rss/cnn_topstories.rss)). If you click on this link, it will take you to a page with XML information. The first line says “<rss version=“2.0”>”. This means that we are in the right place for an RSS feed. Return to the Thunderbird program where you left it, managing subscriptions to RSS feeds. Now select the **Add** button. It will prompt you to enter a “feed URL.” This is the aforementioned url ([http://rss.cnn.com/rss/cnn\\_topstories.rss](http://rss.cnn.com/rss/cnn_topstories.rss)). Enter this into the “feed URL” field and select the OK button. Thunderbird will now populate your News and Blog account with a CNN icon. This CNN icon represents your RSS feed. Notice that unread news stories are darkened, while read ones are lightened. Select a news story like you would an email. The CNN News feed downloads the actual webpage content.



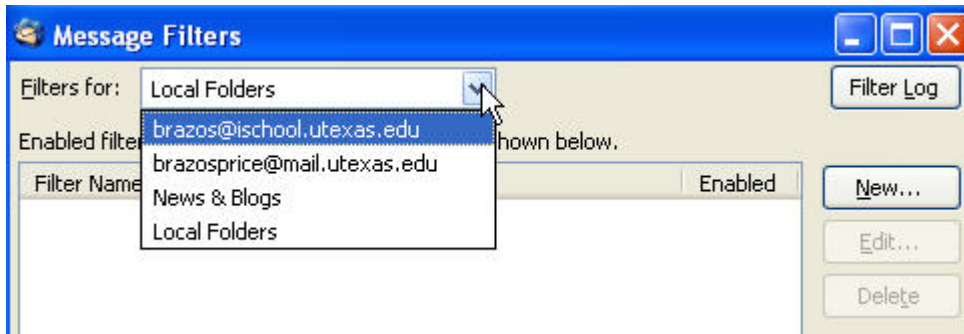
If you are on a slower connection, or would like to be more discriminating, change the options of the feed (click on News and Blogs on the side → **manage subscriptions** → **select CNN.com** → **Edit feed** → check the “Show the article summary instead of loading the Web Page”). From here, you can edit your feed or even erase it. Notice that when selecting an article, it acts like a webpage; clicking on links in the article will in fact open up a new web browser and take you to the linked content.

Now try adding an RSS feed for a blog, in this case <http://brazos.indylibrarian.net/blog/>. Go to the website and look for the RSS feed. For this example, the RSS feed for the entries is located at the bottom of the website, where it says, “Syndicate entries using RSS.” Click on this link and it will bring you to a webpage that looks similar to the one at CNN – a valid RSS feed. Copy the link (<http://www.brazos.indylibrarian.net/blog/wp-rss2.php>) and go back to Thunderbird and follow the same procedure that you did with the CNN feed in order to add it to your inbox. Once added, return to the main Thunderbird interface. Notice how under the new blog “response”, only the text, and not the entire webpage content is visible; depending on the feed, this may occur. Also notice that a time stamp is used when downloading the messages, and much like those of an email, it indicates when a blog or article was posted.

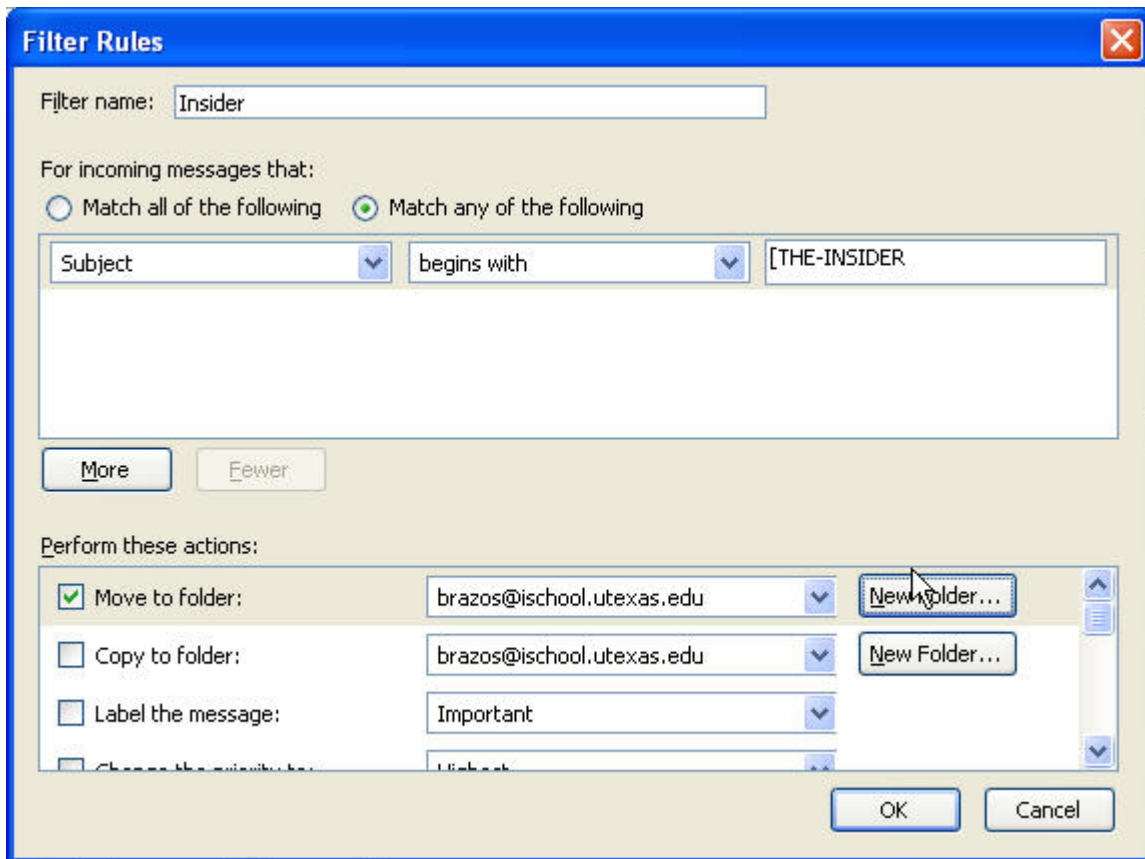
## Setting up Filters

Often we receive more messages a day than we know what to do with. This can become even more difficult when one considers combining different email address and adding RSS feeds. One way of lessening the cognitive load is creating filters. Filters can be set up to automatically categorize email messages; due to this categorization, different actions may be taken. For example, most School of Information students are a member of a several email listservs, SASI being the most prominent and the most voluminous. Fortunately, all of the emails from the SASI listserv (the Insider) begin with “[THE-INSIDER”.

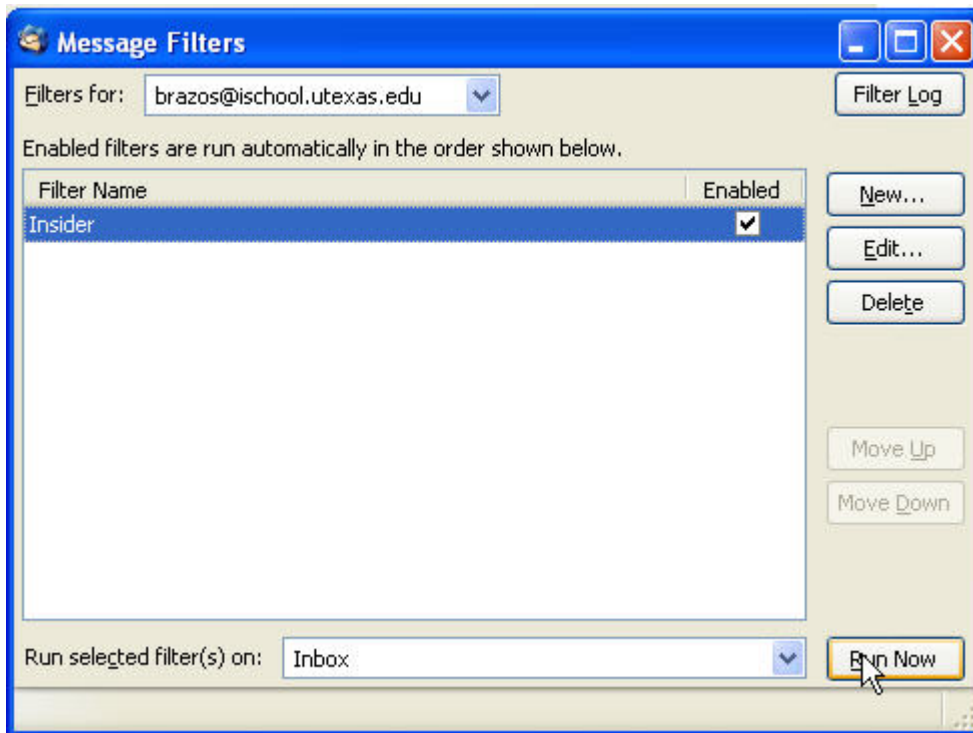
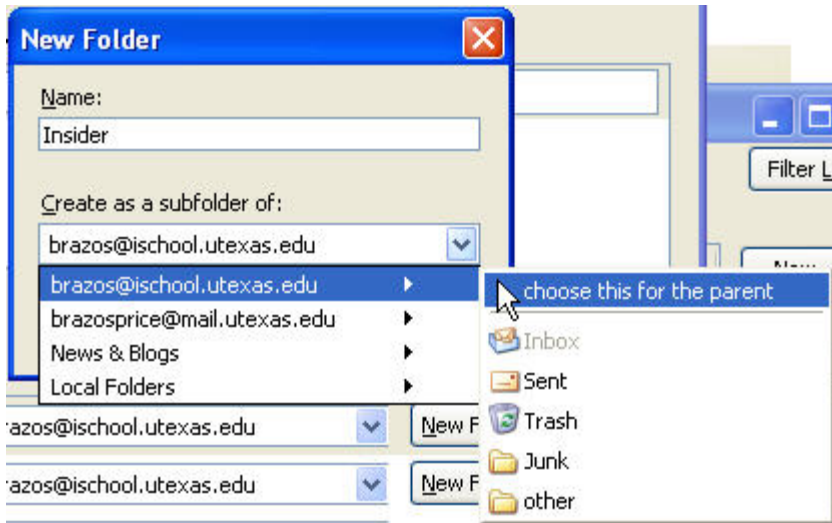
We can use this common tag to filter them down to a more cognitively acceptable level. First go to the **tools** → **message filters** and then select your iSchool account.



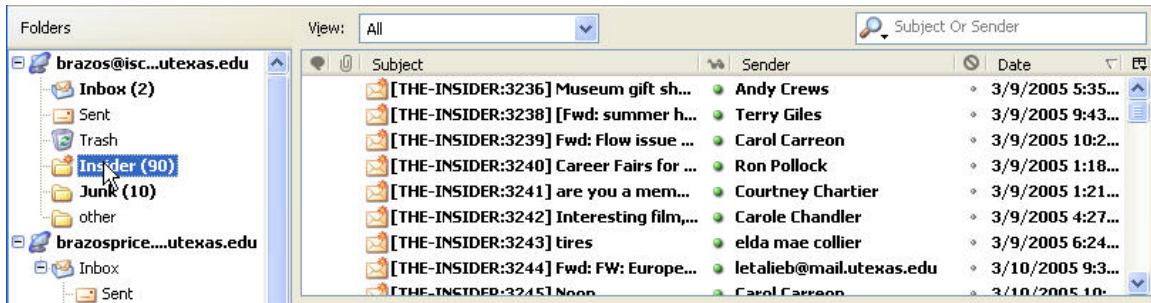
Then you should select “New...” and name your filter “The Insider”. For your filter select “Subject” “begins with” “[THE-INSIDER” under “**Perform these actions:**”



Do not click OK yet first you need to make a new folder. Click on “New Folder...” to create a new folder under your iSchool account. Call this folder “Insider” and move all messages that fit the aforementioned criteria to the “Insider” folder.



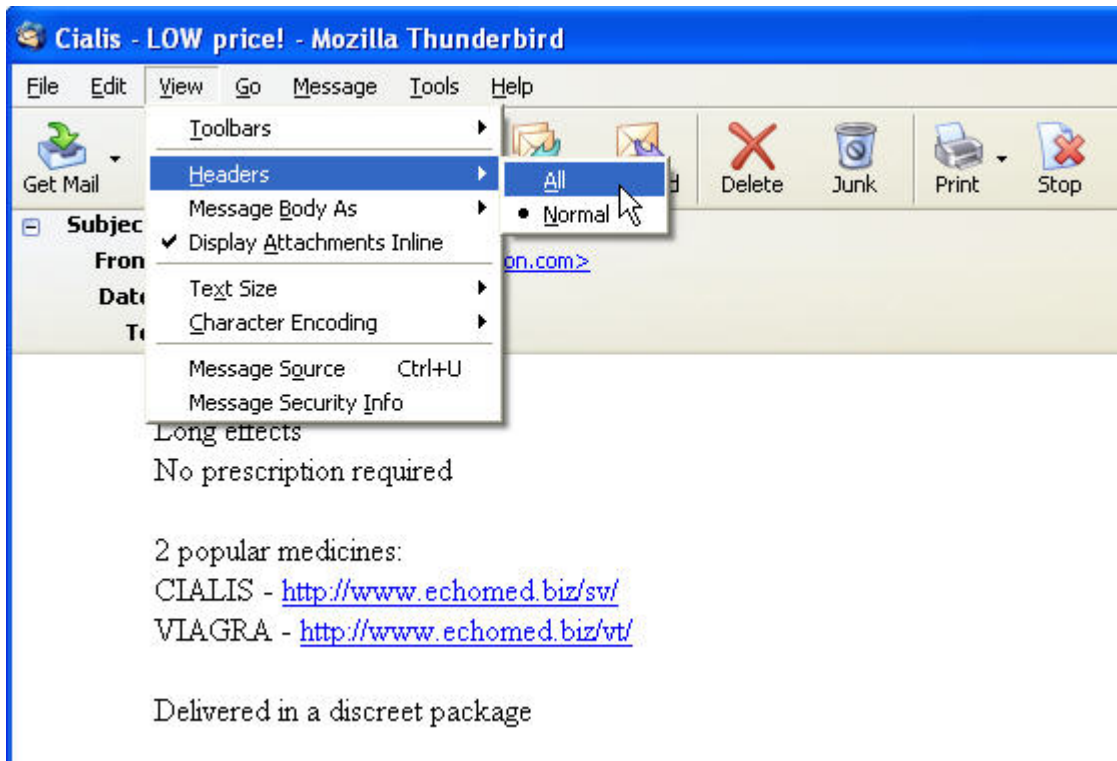
Run the Filter now.



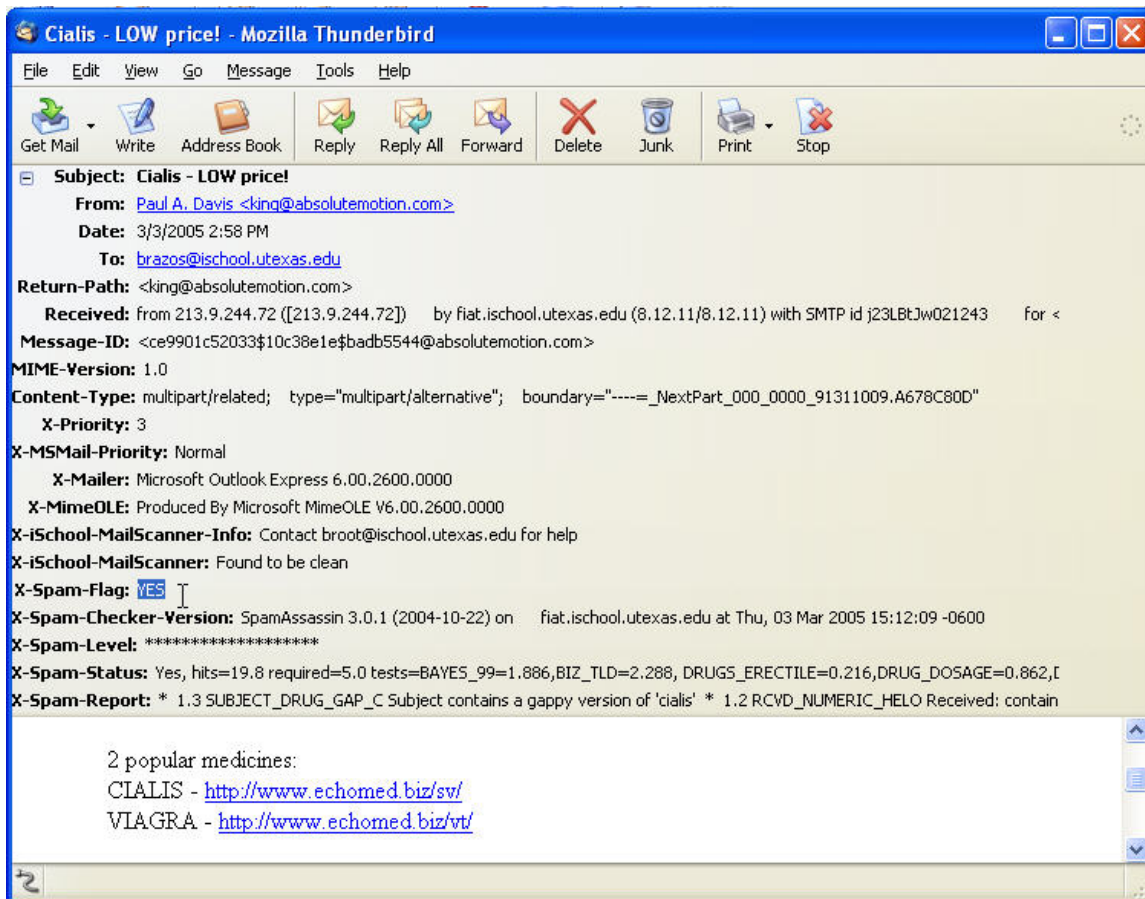
Filtering has the ability to massively change the way that you use email.

## Spam/Junk Mail Detection

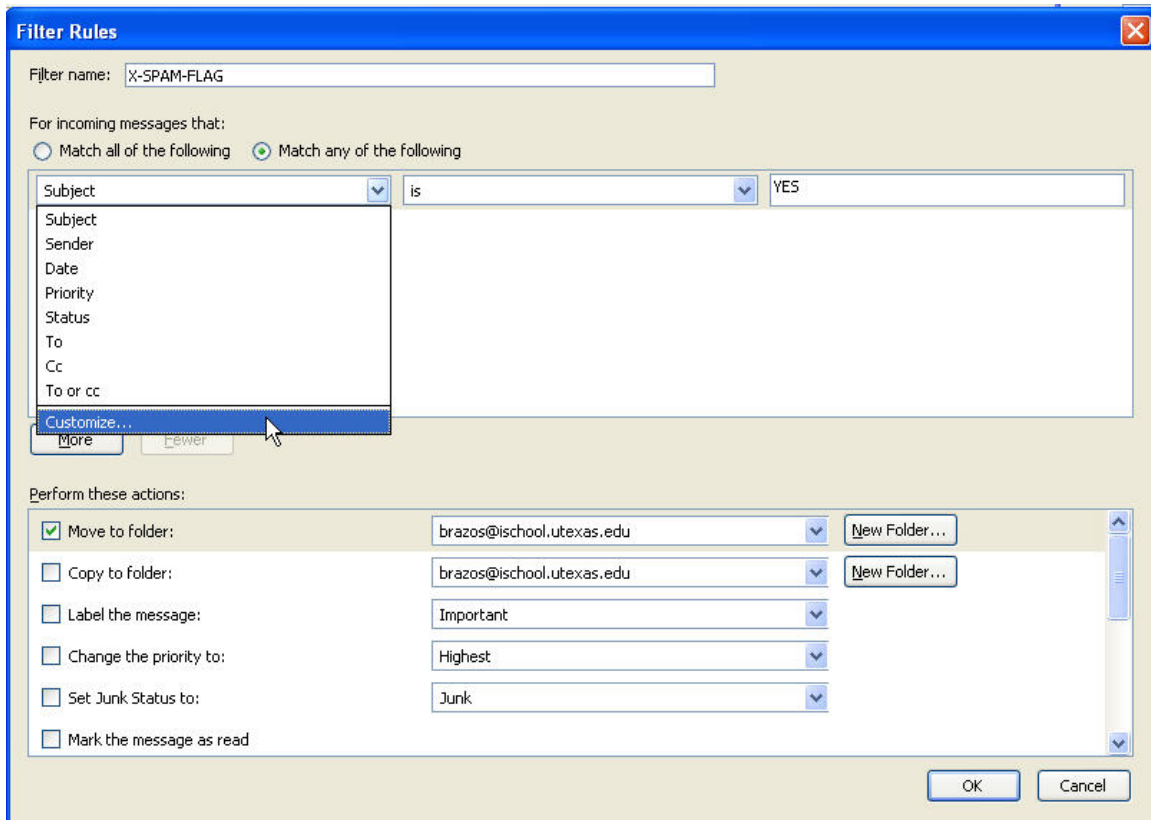
You can also use filters to fine tune spam and junk mail detection. The iSchool comes with a built in spam detector, Spam Assassin. If Spam Assassin thinks that a message is spam, then it will flag it as such in the headers. Go to your iSchool inbox. Open (double click) a message. Go to the menu bar. Choose **View → Headers → All**.



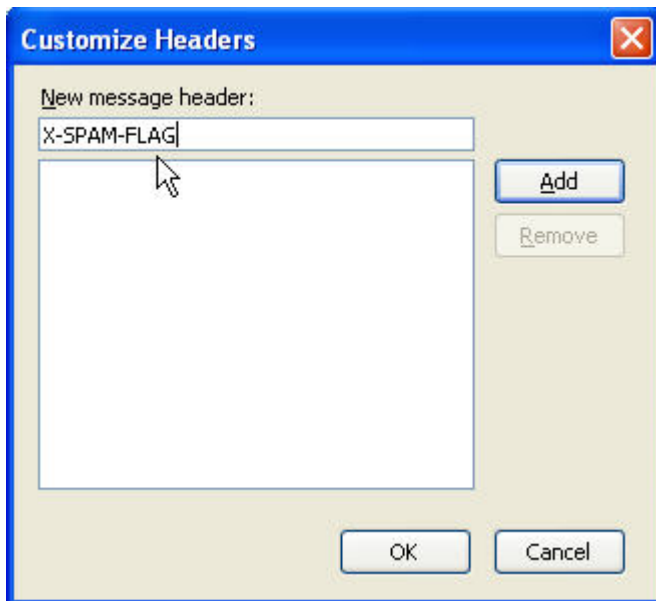
If you see a header that says “**X-Spam-Flag: YES**” then Spam Assassin thinks that this message is spam. We can filter out messages that Spam Assassin thinks are spam by using a specialized filter.



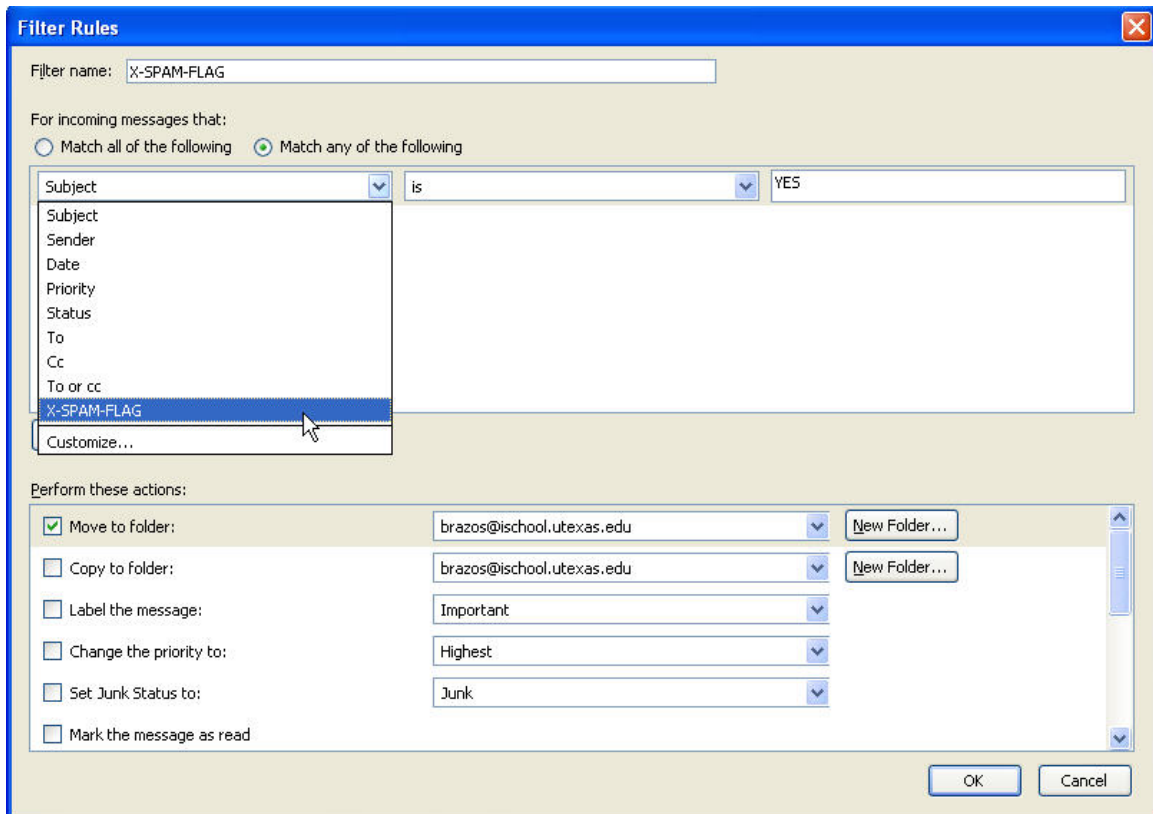
As before, go to the **tools** → **message filters** and then select your iSchool account. Then you should select “New...” and name your filter “X-SPAM-FLAG”. For your filter, select “Customize...”.



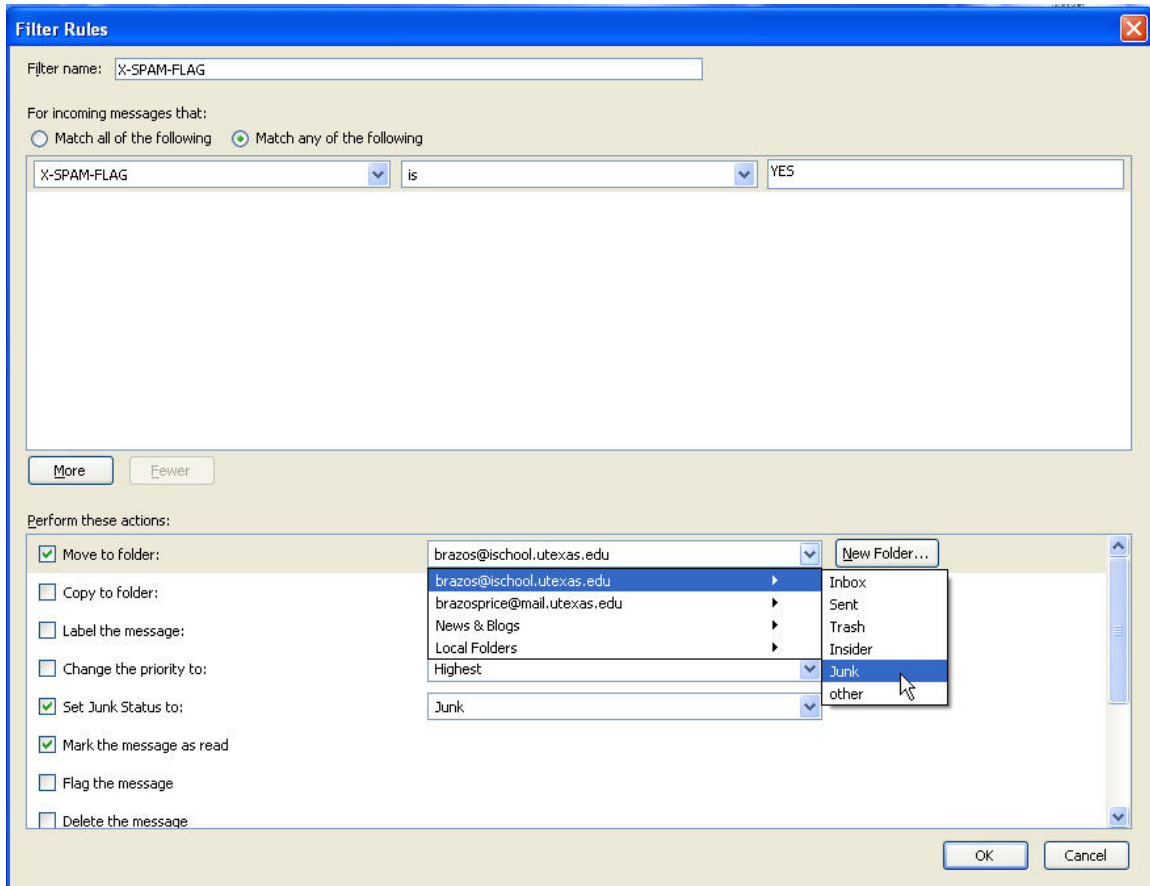
This will bring you to a new screen that says “New message header:” In this box type “X-Spam-Flag”, then click ok.



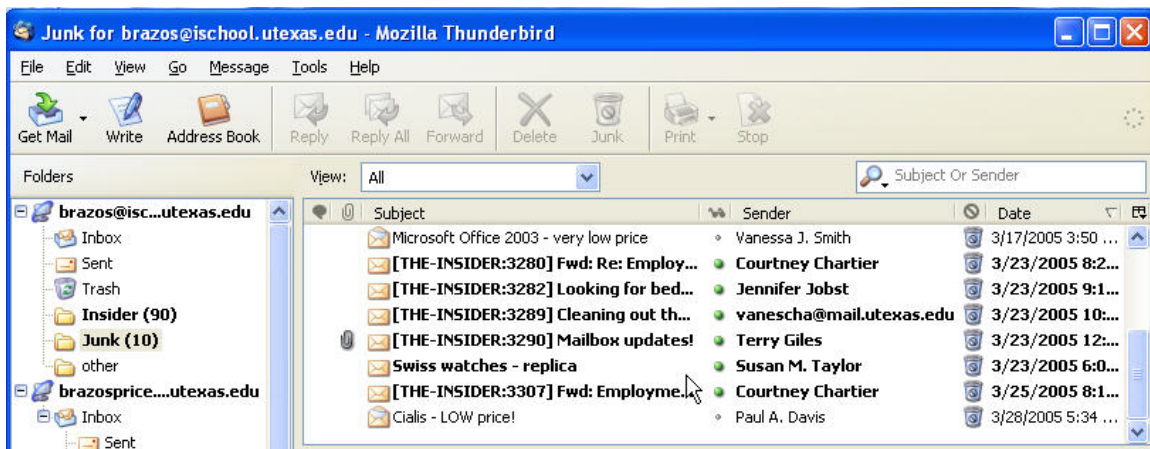
Now in the first drop down menu, you will be able to select “X-Spam-Flag”,



then in the second “Contains”, then in the empty box “Yes”. Then under “**Perform these actions:**” choose move to **Junk** folder underneath your iSchool account.



Now whenever Spam Assassin thinks a message is junk mail, it will move it to the Junk folder, and you will not have to deal with it.



The methodology employed here will also work with other server side spam filters - check all of your headers to find the right customizable filter term to use.

In Thunderbird, there are additional methods that can be used to pick up spam messages. Thunderbird has an adaptive spam filter that, based on user responses (that's you!), will alter its metric for determining which messages are spam. Simply select a message that you consider to be junk mail and click on the **Junk** button up top to label it as such. Thunderbird (based on your responses) will begin to preemptively label messages spam. If it labels a message incorrectly, simple click on the **Junk** button once more to show Thunderbird that the selected email is normal.

