Lyris MailShield Desktop Version 2.5 Manual - EXCERPT

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How MailShield Desktop Works

The Origins of MailShield Desktop

Like you, we receive a lot of email. We receive questions, support requests, comments, orders, mail from friends and associates, and unfortunately, a lot of spam. The amount of spam increases continually.

When we tried the available spam filtering tools, the results were disappointing. While most of them did a good job at identifying spam, they caused us to lose a lot of our other email. We did a test by putting 50 “good” email messages and 50 spam messages in one account and checked to see what happened. The programs flagged 70-90% of the spam messages, but also removed up to 30% of the mail that was not spam.

Just adding a list of trusted senders (friends) did not help, because we receive a lot of mail from people we do not know. This is true for most people. For example, if you order products online, buy or sell on Ebay, ask for support via email from a software company or forget to add someone to the program, you receive email from people you do not know.

So, we realized there was a need for good spam software!

MailShield Desktop's Mission

Therefore we tried to build a product that…

- does not lose desirable email
- works with a minimum of tuning and configuration
- can be customized to specific needs
- and identifies as much spam as possible

We believe we were successful!

MailShield Desktop's Approach

This program has a unique approach for identifying the spam mail in your inbox. It looks for indications in your email to create an analysis of whether or not the mail is likely to be spam. The decision making process is not based on strict Yes/No logic; instead it uses fuzzy logic and deals with probabilities.

How MailShield Desktop Determines Spam

Most of the indicators are based on words and phrases in the email. However, MailShield Desktop not only checks whether a certain word is present, but also how significant it is, and how and where it appears in the message.

MailShield Desktop also considers things like the design of the subject field or the recipient fields (often your address does not appear in the recipient field, or it appears there along with many other people).

If your computer hosts a working DNSAPI.DLL (this is generally true for Windows 2000 and Windows-XP systems) MailShield Desktop can also investigate to see if the sender's email address really exists.

All the findings are weighted and totaled in a list of spam points. The final decision is made based on the number of spam points, combined with the number of different findings.

Not only is great care taken in the identification of spam, but in the retention of messages that are not spam.

How does MailShield Desktop actually work with my email account?

Once you have entered your email account and access information (in Edit Email Account, General tab and Edit Email Account, Access tab) MailShield Desktop will check the messages in your email account directly. Based on the configurations you set in your Spam Handling, MailShield Desktop may flag some of your mail messages as spam, and may move those messages to the Trash Mail. These messages will not be viewable in your inbox once they have been moved. However, you may recover them from the Trash Mail. You may also opt to remove them permanently, but this is not recommended until you are experienced with MailShield Desktop.

You may configure the time interval at which MailShield Desktop checks for new mail. (Edit email account, General tab) To ensure that spam does not reach your mail program's inbox, simply set the time interval at which MailShield Desktop checks your email at less than the time interval at which your mail program checks email.

For example, if you use Outlook and you have configured Outlook (in Outlook, use the Tools menu, Options, Mail Delivery tab) to check your mail every 3 minutes and you set MailShield Desktop to check your mail every minute, spam should be flagged and removed (to the Trash mail) by MailShield Desktop before it ever reaches your Outlook Inbox.

More:
Fine Tuning MailShield Desktop's Spam Detection
Will MailShield Desktop Work with My Email?
What is MailShield Desktop
Getting Started

Fine Tuning MailShield Desktop's Spam Detection

The Spam Detection Dilemma

There are two conflicting goals with automatic spam management: You want the tool to recognize and flag as many spam as possible, but at the same time you want it retain as many of your desirable email as possible. It is difficult to achieve these goals simultaneously.

This trade-off may be most apparent when configuring MailShield Desktop's Spam handling options (Tools, Spam Handling and Detection). You can lower the limit for automatic spam deletion (i.e. make spam handling more aggressive), which will increase the hit ratio for spam (95% or more can easily be achieved this way) but with this configuration you will increase the risk of losing desirable mail. If you set the limit for spam deletion higher, more spam will remain in your mailbox.

Resolving the Conflict

The key to resolving this conflict is to tell MailShield Desktop as much about your acceptable/desirable mail as you can. Every mail that contains a word or phrase included in the Accepted Mail dialog box will be "safe" from being flagged as spam… no matter how many spam indicators appear in it and how aggressive the program is configured to be.

Some Examples

For example, if you frequently exchange email about basketball, you should put your favorite team and player names and words like "NBA", "basketball", “hoops”, "league" and "score" into the interests list. Once you have a fairly complete interest list, you can make spam handling more aggressive, because mail about your favorite topic will always get through.

Additionally, if you correspond with only a few people by email, enter your friends and associates names or email addresses into the program. Then, mail from them will always get through, no matter what spam indicative language they may use in their email.

And, if you are subscribed to mailing lists, you should add keywords that identify them to the list of interests as completely as possible. Typical mailing lists and spam have many characteristics in common. If you tell MailShield Desktop (Accepted Mail, Receiver Verification) that your regular mailing lists are completely covered by your list of interests, MailShield Desktop will be able assign higher significance to email that shows these characteristics, but is not on that list.

More:

How MailShield Desktop Works
Accepted Mail
Spam Handling and Detection

Options: Customize

Main Window

Start program automatically

If this option is enabled your computer will start MailShield Desktop when you log on. This option is similar to putting MailShield Desktop into the Startup group in the Start menu (The Windows registry is used for this feature instead of the startup menu).

Start program minimized

If enabled, this option will hide the program in the taskbar when it is started.

The [X] button in the main window minimizes the program

If this setting is enabled the [X] button in the title bar will minimize the MailShield Desktop window to the desktop instead of closing the program.

Hide toolbar

This option hides the graphical toolbar to reduce window size.

Taskbar Icon

Taskbar icon clicks ...

When the program is minimized, it hides itself in a small envelope icon in the system taskbar (the taskbar in the lower right corner of the Windows desktop). This option allows you to configure the action associated with a double click, a Shift+click and/or a Ctrl+click of that icon.

... write new mail

Start the mail program to write a new email.

... display the last pop-up message

Redisplay the contents of the last pop-up window. This option can be especially useful if you are away from your computer and would like to see if there was new mail without reconnecting to the internet.

... check accounts for new mail

Connect to all accounts that have the taskbar icon mail check option set.

... display available mail

Connect to all accounts that have the taskbar-icon mail check option set and display all available mail (up to a maximum of 10). This will only differ from the 'check accounts for new mail' function above if you have 'List Mail Details' enabled but 'List All Available Mail' disabled in Alert Pop-up Options; otherwise both functions will show the same window.

More:
Options

Enter License Code

If you are using an evaluation copy of MailShield and order a licensed copy, you will receive a license code. Select Enter License Code from the Help Menu to see the License Code dialog window. Enter your code to enable the licensed version of MailShield.

Main Window

MailShield's main program window allows you to access all of MailShield's mail and spam flagging options. The main window displays a list of all of the accounts you have added to MailShield. When you select an account by clicking on it, you may use the Edit Account menu to change or configure that account. You may also select the inbox view from the edit account menu to display a list of email messages in that account's inbox.

Message: Show Message

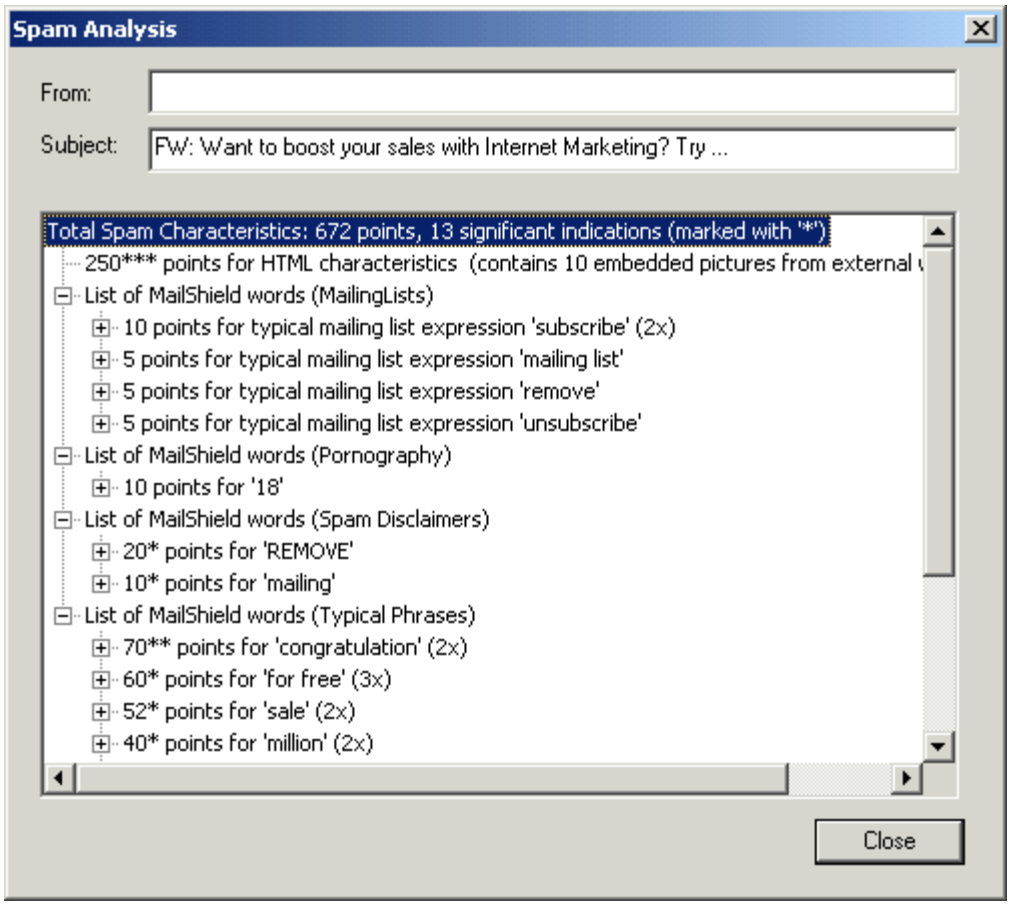
Select Show Message to display the Message Quick View window. This allows you to preview any email message. If the complete message is not displayed, you may have configured MailShield to only download part of your messages. You may change these options by selecting Edit Email Account: Access and changing the Download Email Text Option.

Message: Show MailShield's Analysis

You may view MailShield's spam analysis of each message. The first line of the analysis provides the total number of spam points and the total number of spam indicators in the message. These totals are used to determine if MailShield will treat the message as spam. (See Spam Handling and Detection: Spam Management for point configuration options.)

The analysis details each indicator that was detected, and the number of points assigned for each indicator.

For example, in the spam analysis log shown here, MailShield assigned a total of 672 spam points and found 13 significant spam indications.



Message: Add Sender to list of spam senders

When you receive a spam message that MailShield did not flag as spam, you may manually add the sender to the list of spam senders. This will allow MailShield to flag all future messages from that sender as spam.

If MailShield flagged the message as spam, it is not necessary to manually add the sender to the list of spam senders.

See also:
Add sender to list of friends
Add subject to list of spam phrases

Message: Add subject to list of spam phrases

When you receive a spam message that MailShield did not flag as spam, you may manually add the subject of the message to the list of phrases that indicate the message is spam. This will allow MailShield to flag all future messages with that subject as spam.

If MailShield flagged the message as spam, it is not necessary to manually add the subject to the list of spam phrases.

See also:

Add sender to list of spam senders
Add subject to list of interests

Message: Add sender to list of friends

You can help MailShield identify your desirable messages by adding senders to your list of friends. If you regularly receive mail from a friend or associate and would like MailShield to always treat the message as a desired one, simply select the message and then select **Add sender to list of friends**. Mail from that sender will never be flagged as spam.

See also:
Add subject to list of interests
Add Sender to list of spam senders

Message: Add subject to list of interests

You can help MailShield identify your desirable messages by adding subjects to your list of interests. If you regularly receive mail with a specific subject line (for example a newsgroup message you like to receive) and would like MailShield to always treat the messages as desired ones, simply select one of the messages and then select **Add subject to list of interests**. Mail with this subject line will never be flagged as spam.

See also:
Add sender to list of friends
Add subject to list of spam phrases

Options

The program's options are available from the Tools menu and are subdivided into six topics:

- Customize
- Message List
- Network
- Outgoing Mail
- File Locations
- Maintenance

Trash Mail Window

The Trash Mail window allows you to view the messages that MailShield has flagged as spam. When messages are displayed in the Trash Mail window, you may preview them, recover them or delete them.

You may set the point value for messages to be moved to the Trash Mail window in Tools: Spam Handling and Detection: Spam Management.

Messages that have been placed in the Trash Mail may be recovered by selecting the Recover this message button.