




Email has just Evolved!

With *Evolution*, managing emails, contacts and a calendar is easy.

 YOU CAN'T get very far in the age of the internet without access to email, and it's often the first thing you configure when you start using a new system. There are as many email applications for Linux as there are penguins in Antarctica, and they range from the simplistic and utilitarian to the full-featured behemoth.

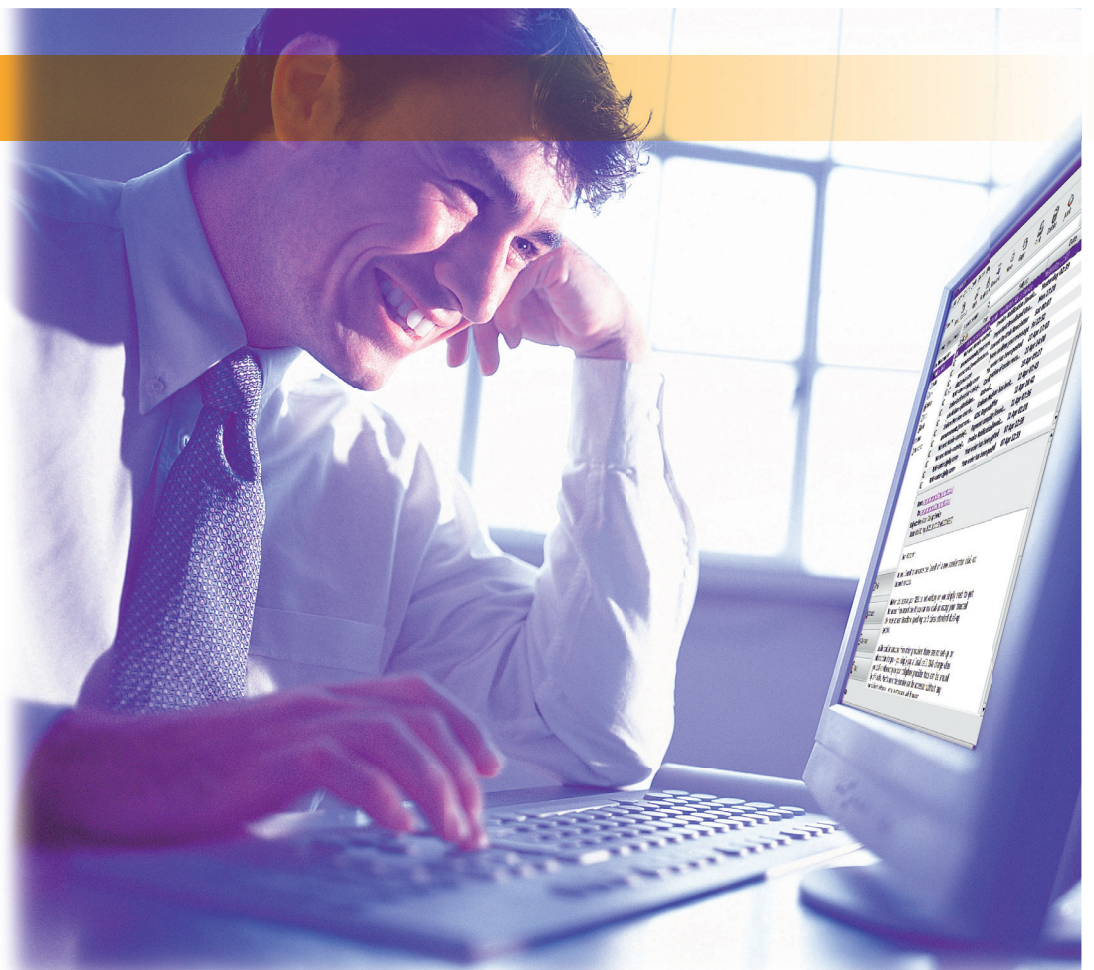
Gnome's *Evolution* falls into the latter category, being an application loosely 'inspired' by Microsoft's *Outlook*, where your emails can sit quite happily alongside your notes and schedules.

Evolution was developed to provide a one-stop form of what has become known as Personal Information Management, or PIM for short. We've mainly got Microsoft to thank for making a PIM application one of the most frequently requested features for Linux, thanks to its groundbreaking work on *Outlook*. In the unlikely event that you've not actually used *Outlook* before, your email takes centre stage in a single application that links your address book, personal schedules, calendars and meeting organiser. *Outlook* took what were previously considered disparate parts, and combined them in such a way that the whole was greater than the sum of the separate components.

EMAIL TO GO

If you have used *Outlook* or a similar application, *Evolution* will feel very familiar. The main window consists of a series of tabs on the lower-left part of the screen that let you switch between browsing your email, looking at your address book, making notes on a calendar and setting up to-do lists for yourself (see *Evolution At A Glance* box, above right). But the one you'll spend the most time in is the email tab, which is what *Evolution* presents you with by default.

Emails are downloaded and placed into your inbox, with the message subjects listed to the right of the folder view. Unread emails are marked in bold, and you can click your way through the list, reading each as it appears in the message pane. Double-clicking on the subject line will open a separate email window, where you have some extra options. From the main window, the majority of tasks you need with email can be triggered from the button bar, such as replying to or creating an email.



HOWTO... SET UP EVOLUTION

Before starting, you'll need to have certain details at hand for configuration: the internet addresses of your POP server and SMTP server, your login details and your password. This will suffice for the vast majority of users, but depending on your setup you may need other details as well.

When you first start *Evolution*, you are presented with a configuration wizard that takes you through entering your account information. The first window is simple enough, asking for your full name and email address. You can leave the other fields empty if you wish (Reply-To is used as a return address if you'd like correspondence directed to a different account).

Email is usually sent and received via a server, and it's this information that *Evolution* needs next. In the Receiving Mail window (shown above right), you first need to specify which protocol you are using. This is usually POP or, increasingly, IMAP.

You then enter the server address, which usually takes the form of pop.yourispmailserver.com, followed by your username (this is normally either your email address or your ISP logon username). If you know that your mail server uses a secure connection you can enter



the details below the username. It's also worth activating Remember Password.

Pressing Next takes you to the second Receiving Mail window, where you can set up an interval for automatically checking your email.

Finally, there's the Sending Mail window. You need to enter the address of the server responsible for sending your email – most people will use the SMTP server provided by their ISP for this.

Like the receiving server, this usually takes the form of

Before you wipe all traces of Windows from your system you must know your email details.

mail.yourispmailserver.com, and doesn't usually need a password as your ISP can detect your legitimacy automatically. If you select *sendmail*, the email will be sent directly from your machine, without using any server at all.

After that, you can finish the startup wizard, and *Evolution* will finish loading.



EVOLUTION AT A GLANCE

You can deal with email that's either waiting to be downloaded from the server or queued in your outbox by clicking on this button.

You can easily search your email using this field. The results will be listed in the message list.

You can flag any spurious email that you don't find relevant as spam using the Junk button. *Evolution* will learn to always mark similar messages as spam.

These folders work in the same way as with other email applications: your mail is downloaded to your inbox, from where you can arrange it into your own folders.

Virtual Folders sort email without any user intervention; the perfect way to manage mailing lists or sort email from specific correspondents.

Evolution combines email with an address book, a calendar for events and a task manager that works as a kind of to-do list.

Your email is listed according to subject. Selecting the email allows you to open it in a window or preview it in the message window.

The message window is where you can read your email. Double-clicking opens a specific window for each message.

You can sort your email into folders in much the same way as you can with the files in your home directory, but *Evolution* offers an even better way, using what it calls Virtual Folders. These are practically the same as ordinary message folders, except they filter the mail for you automatically. To create one, just click on the New drop-down menu, and make sure you create a folder with VFolders as its parent. *Evolution* will then ask you to define some search criteria, which you can set as anything from a sender's email address to any mailing lists you may subscribe to, or a combination of them both.

A quicker way of achieving the same end is to select the kind of message you'd like to be included, then choose Create Virtual Folder From Message from the Tools menu followed by specifying the search criteria again. After this, *Evolution* will automatically move any email that matches the criteria into the virtual folder.

You can still use folders and filters in the way you may be used to, by creating them outside the Virtual Folder hierarchy, and this is a good way of organising any older email. One button you may not be familiar with is the one labelled Junk. This is an attempt to curb the annoying number of unsolicited emails. *Evolution* integrates one of the best tools for filtering the wheat from the chaff, which is combatively called *SpamAssassin*.

SpamAssassin works by building up a set of rules that it can commonly apply to your email messages. This doesn't mean that it doesn't work to start off with – it does, and very well. But occasionally it will make a mistake, and you'll find a spurious spam

message has found its way into your inbox, in which case you need to select it and click on the Junk button. This lets *SpamAssassin* learn from its mistakes, hopefully reducing the likelihood of you getting such messages again. It's this intelligence that makes *SpamAssassin* so clever.

NAMES AND ADDRESSES

The next tab down from Mail is Contacts. This is where you can add all your address book information or use any online address facilities that your company may provide (using the LDAP protocol). It works as you might expect, allowing you to enter names and addresses, images and internet

and your contacts list. Making an arrangement for a meeting with people contained in your contact list prompts the software to automatically email those involved, and manages their replies.

Finally, there's the Tasks tab, where you can create a list of things that you need to do, according to your own criteria. You can link your tasks to external websites, and set different priorities for different categories. You may not find yourself using all the features to start with, but because the task list and calendar are integrated, using them along with your email can become second nature.

Evolution's main strength lies in its email though, and it really is one of the best email clients around.

“Evolution integrates one of the best tools for filtering the wheat from the chaff, known as SpamAssassin.”

contact details. The best part about the Contacts feature is that it's totally integrated into the *Evolution* environment. If you're using the right server, you can even see your contacts' schedules when arranging meetings – it's designed to help share information so that you can run your organisation more smoothly.

Following Contacts is the Calendars tab, which acts as a personal diary. You can make notes, schedule events and look ahead. As with the other parts of *Evolution*, this is all linked to both your email

It uses one of the finest HTML rendering engines for viewing emails, and there's almost no risk of viral infection in the same way there is with *Outlook*. Composing emails is also well implemented, with real-time spellchecking and formatting. It all works so intuitively, you'll wonder how you managed without it. Overall, *Evolution* is one of the best PIMs available, across all operating systems, but it's only by actually using it that you'll begin to realise how good it is. ●