

How to Get Help:

An introduction to OpenOffice.org Technical Support



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Overview

This chapter describes the various forms of technical and user support for OpenOffice.org, a volunteer-run project.

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Feedback

Please direct any comments or suggestions about this document to:

authors@user-faq.openoffice.org

Modifications and updates

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of Change</i>
1.0	14 Nov 2004	Initial version of document.

OpenOffice.org technical support

How OpenOffice.org technical support works

OpenOffice.org is an open source software project. As such, it comes with excellent community-based technical support, which is not only free, but when used correctly, can be far superior to any commercial technical support.

The dynamics of this tech support can be confusing and frustrating for someone not familiar with them. In this section you will learn how to use the available technical support effectively.

Important - Read this first!

If you remember nothing else from this guide, please make sure you remember this. Whenever you ask for technical support, make *absolutely sure you state the following*:

- 1) Which version of OpenOffice.org you are running.
- 2) What your operating system is (for example, Windows XP).
- 3) If there is an error, state *clearly* what it is and how we can reproduce it.
- 4) Do not attach files to mail messages.

We absolutely *need* you to include this information before we can help you.

Kinds of technical support

There are two types of community tech support: **Forums** and **Mailing Lists**. Each has its pros and cons. I suggest that you try both for a while, and then decide which one is best for you. It is also worthwhile checking **Issue Tracker** to see anyone else has reported a similar issue and if not to report it yourself.

Forums

If you are familiar with the Internet, you are probably familiar with forums. Forums are web-based bulletin boards where any subscriber can post messages.

Pros

- Check messages at your convenience.
- Some people find the web interface friendlier.

Cons

- You might not get as many responses.
- It will take longer to get responses.
- Most experienced users lurk in the mailing lists.

The main OpenOffice.org forums can be found at **OOoForum**: <http://www.ooffice.org>

How to subscribe to the forums

- 1) Go to <http://www.oooforum.org>
- 2) In the top-right corner, click on “Register”.
- 3) Read the terms. If you agree, click on “I Agree”.
- 4) Fill in your user name, email and password. All other information is optional.
- 5) Click Submit.

How to post to a forum

- 1) Go to <http://www.oooforum.org> and type your login and password (right hand side).
- 2) Click on the forum that is most appropriate for your question.
- 3) To ask a new question, click on New thread. To read a discussion, click on its subject.

Mailing Lists

In a mailing list, there is a central email address (e.g., users@openoffice.org). Whenever an email is sent to this address, it is received by every person who is subscribed to the list. To ask a question, you send an email to this address, and every subscriber receives it.

Note: It is important that you reply to the mailing list, and not solely to the original poster. This way everyone will know that the question has been answered.

Pros

- You will receive more responses.
- You will receive responses more quickly.
- Experienced users frequent the lists more.

Cons

- You might get swamped by the volume of messages. You will receive a copy of every question anyone sends to the list, as well as the responses.

How to subscribe/unsubscribe to a mailing list

To **subscribe** to the mailing list, send an email to users-subscribe@openoffice.org.

To **unsubscribe**, send an email to users-unsubscribe@openoffice.org.

*NOTE: This is a high-volume mailing list. If you are not used to receiving a lot of emails a day, you should consider the **digest** option. This way, you will only get a single daily email containing all of the day's posts to the list.*

users-digest-subscribe@openoffice.org.

users-digest-unsubscribe@openoffice.org.

How to post to a mailing list

Once you are subscribed to the mailing list, you can post a message by sending an email to users@openoffice.org. Everyone on the list will get this email (including yourself).

When you reply to an email from the list, be sure to reply to the list itself, not just the individual poster. This way everyone will know what responses have been sent. This practise also allows everyone with the same question to learn from this post.

Issue Tracker

Another thing to do, is to see if someone has logged a fault or request for a new feature. This can be done by searching for issues at <http://www.openoffice.org/>. Before you can log faults or make feature requests, you are required to register. Registration has no cost associated with it; nor will registered users receive spam.

How to get the best technical support

The main virtue of open source support is the community. Instead of dealing with a single individual, who might or might not know how to solve your problem, you will have an entire team of volunteers putting their heads together to help you. To use this technical support effectively, you must understand this principle.

How to get your email read by the right people

The first step towards getting the answer you need is to make sure that the right person reads your query.

Post to the right place

If you post to a forum, choose the forum that best fits the area of your problem. If you post to a list, you should usually post to users@openoffice.org.

Post to the entire list

If you use the mailing list, send all your messages to the entire list. In many cases, no single person will be able to solve your problem. But if we work together we can find a solution.

Use a descriptive subject line

Volunteers usually scan the subject titles to find the posts which they feel able to answer. If you do not use a meaningful subject title your post will be read last (if at all).

Provide all the relevant information

Provide all the information we need to be able to help you. Whenever you request technical support, *make absolutely certain* that you state the following:

- Which operating system you are running (for example, Windows XP or RedHat 8.3).
- Which version of OpenOffice.org you are running.
- The *exact* error message if any, and a step-by-step description to reproduce the problem.
- A clear description of the problem. State what you expected to happen, and how your expectation was not met.

Netiquette – rules of good behavior

Technical support is provided by a group of volunteers helping you in their free time. Please be kind enough to follow some rules of conduct.

What is not allowed

The forums and mailing lists are intended for the support of OpenOffice.org. In light of this, there are certain things which are not permitted:

- **Advertising**, except for a small note inside a legitimate message, or in response to a question.
- **Spam or virus warnings**.
- **Chain letters**. Sorry to break it to you. Email tracing is not possible and Bill Gates is not going to pay you to send junk to our list.
- **Attachments**. These can carry viruses and also present a huge problem for people using dial-up connections. For this reason all attachments are deleted automatically.
- **Personal attacks**. It is all right to disagree. It is *not* all right to attack, insult or offend the writer. In our community we expect an atmosphere of mutual respect where diversity of opinion is valued.

What is requested

Much of what makes netiquette is simple common sense. However, several of these rules will be new to someone who is not from the community.

- **Be polite and respectful**.
- **Be concise**. Long messages are annoying and probably will not be read in their entirety. The basic rule is “think twice, post once”.
- **Post only to one list**. Posting to multiple lists is frowned upon.
- **Keep the original text when you reply to a post**. Otherwise it will be very difficult to follow the thread of discussion.
- **Do not use HTML in emails**. There are several reasons we do not like it when people use HTML on their emails:
 - It wastes bandwidth and makes the download bigger. This puts pressure on our servers and can be a real problem for people on dial-up connections.
 - The most experienced users very often do not even have HTML-enabled mail clients.
 - For users with the digest option, your email will look like a bunch of illegible code.

- Some of the OpenOffice.org users are blind and use text-to-speech software to access their email. HTML code renders this software useless. Thus, by using HTML you are effectively cutting them off from the community.

In other words, using HTML in email will not only limit the number and quality of responses you get, but it is considered something very rude and inconsiderate by our community.