Mail Act-On FAQ

General Questions

What is Mail Act-On? What does it do?
>   *Mail Act-On is a plug-in for Apple's Mail.app. It
>   extends Mail's functionality by adding the ability to
>   attach special "Act-On" Rules to keystrokes to
>   allow efficient management of mail messages.*

What are the system and software requirements for
Mail Act-On?
>   *Mail Act-On is compatible with Mail 1.2 for Mac OS
>   X 10.3 (Panther) and Mail 2.0 for Mac OS X 10.4 (Tiger). It runs on all
>   systems that are capable of running OS X 10.3/10.4 and Mail. The
>   10.4.1 update disabled **all** Mail plug-ins citing compatibilities reasons.
>   The Mail Act-On plug-in is compatible with 10.4.1 and can be re-
>   installed if it was disabled.*

Does Mail Act-On interfere with Mail and regular Mail Rules?
>   *No. Even though Act-On rules are listed in the same list as regular
>   rules, regular rules and Act-On rule function independently of one
>   another.*

Won't Act-On rules be applied to new incoming messages?
>   *No. The plug-in tells Mail to ignore Act-On rules unless you select a
>   specific Act-On rule to perform. However, we recommend that you
>   create a special Act-On Stop Rule that prevents Act-On rules being run
>   as regular rules in the situation where Mail Act-On doesn't load
>   properly. Mail Act On will prompt you to do this if you don't have a
>   Stop Rule.*

Is Mail Act-On compatible with other Mail Plug-ins?
>   *While we haven't tested Mail Act-On with all existing plug-ins, we have
>   found it compatible with popular plug-ins such as HTTPMail, GPGMail.
>   We cannot guarantee 100% compatibility with all current and future
>   plug-ins but if you know of compatibility issues, we would appreciate
>   hearing about them and will work to resolve them if possible.*

Installation

The installer did not work. Can I install Mail Act-On manually?

Yes. If, for whatever reason, the plug-in was not properly installed, you may wish to manually install it.

Step 1: Copy the MailActOn.mailbundle to ~/Library/Mail/Bundles
Step 2: Enable mailbundles in the terminal -- open the terminal and type:
defaults write com.apple.mail EnableBundles 1
defaults write com.apple.mail BundleCompatibilityVersion 1
if you are using 10.4.1 or later, set BundleCompatibilityVersion to 2

I just updated my OS 10.4 to 10.4.1 and now Mail tells me that all mail bundles were deactivated.

Because Mail for Panther and Mail for Tiger are quite different, a number of plug-ins designed for Panther Mail did not function properly in Tiger Mail. Apple response to this was to disable all plugins in 10.4.1 and let the plug-in developers worry about compatibility. Mail Act-On is compatible with 10.4.0 onwards. All you need to do to re-enable Mail Act-On is to run the installer again.

How do I uninstall Mail Act-On?

Locate the MailActOn.mailbundle folder in ~/Library/Mail/Bundles and remove or delete it.
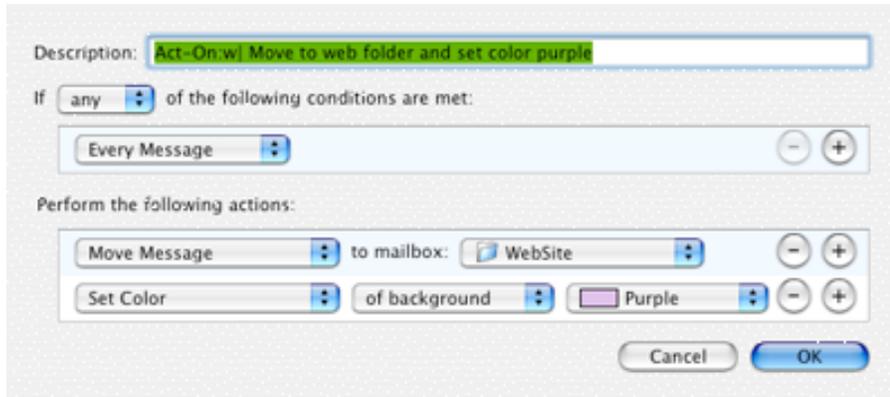

Working with Act-On Rules

How do I create an Act-On Rule?

1. View Mail's preferences and select the Rules pane.
2. Create a new mail rule with a description that has the prefix "Act-On:" followed by the Act-On key to be used for the action, a "vertical pipe" divider | , and finally the action title or description.

For example: "Act-On: w | Move Message to web folder"
3. Configure the actions: Set the rule to apply to every message* and configure the actions as you normally would with normal mail rules.

Description: Act-On:w| Move to web folder and set color purple

If [any] of the following conditions are met:

[Every Message]   ⊖ ⊕

Perform the following actions:

[Move Message] to mailbox: [📁 WebSite]   ⊖ ⊕
[Set Color] [of background] [⬜ Purple]   ⊖ ⊕

Cancel   OK

Where should my Act-On Rules be placed in the rule list?

Act-On rules should be placed at the end of the rule list. Furthermore, we strongly recommend creating a Stop Rule (see below) that is placed before the first Act-On Rule.

Is the order of Act-On Rules important?

In general, no. However, if you have multiple Act-On rules for the same keystroke, the order is important. Multiple Act-On rules for a keystroke will be performed in the same order that they appear in the rule list. (See Advance Act-On Rules below)

Are keystrokes for Act-On Rules case sensitive (is 'a' different than 'A')?

Yes. Mail Act-On will also recognized most option key and shift option combinations (but not 'dead' options, such as option-e, option-i etc, which are used for accenting the following letter)

What should the criteria for Act-On Rules be?

Generally, most people will want to have an Act-On rule apply to every message. However, you can be more specific in your criteria and have multiple rules for a keystroke to provide sophisticate actions that depend on different criteria. (See Advanced Act-On Rules below)

When I finish creating a rule, Mail asks me if I want to apply this rule to existing messages. What should I do?

This dialog appears on the assumption that you have created a regular mail rule and has no effect on Act-On rules. Either a yes or a no response will produce no result here because Act-On rules only responds to keystrokes. We plan to override this message in a future version, this

What is a Stop Rule and why does Mail Act-On recommend that I have one?

Mail Act-On tells mail to ignore any Act-On rules when incoming mail rules are being applied. However, if Mail Act-On is not loaded or

disabled, these rules would not be ignored. Consequently, Act-On rules would be treated as regular rules and undesired results may occur. The Stop Rule is special Act-On rule that must appear before all other Act-On Rules. This rule tells Mail to stop processing rules for all messages prior to getting to any Act-On rule in case the plug-in does not properly load.

Is it possible to have a rule action to mark a message unread or unflagged?

At this time it is not possible. Mail assumes that rules are applied only for incoming mail, it doesn't make sense for Mail to inherently include the ability to unread or unflag a message. However, we are looking in ways that this could be made to work.

When I use an Act-On rule to run an AppleScript, the AppleScript doesn't run or, in some cases, Mail crashes. Is this a bug in Mail Act-On?

No. We have documented this a bug within Mail.app and have verified it by having AppleScripts fail even when Mail Act-On is not installed. Apple has been notified and hopefully this issue will be resolved in a future system update.

Advanced Act-On Rule Configuration

Can I create multiple rules for a single keystroke?

Yes. In fact, this can lead to a great deal of flexibility and power especially when you use specific criteria for different rules. For example. Create 3 rules:

Rule: *Act-On: a | archive mail from family.*
Criteria*:[any] from contains mom@indev.ca*
                from contains dad@indev.ca
Actions: *move message to "Family archive"*
         stop processing rules

Rule: *Act-On: a| archive mail from work*
Criteria: *[any] from contains supervisor@indev.ca*
                from contains coworker@indev.ca
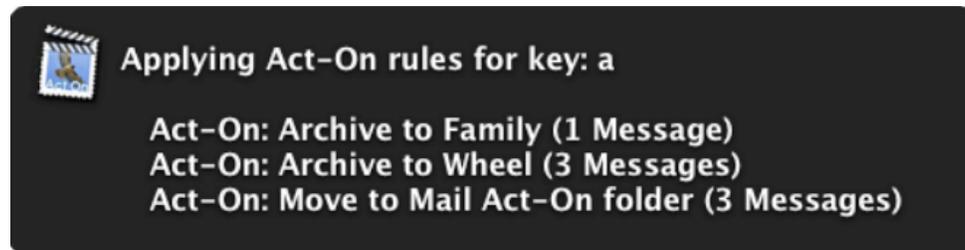**Actions:** *move message to "Work archive"*
         stop processing rules.

Rule: *Act-On a| archive general mail*
Criteria: *[any] every message*
Actions: *move message to "archive"*

Now, when you hit ctrl-a (or Act-On menu -> a), your messages will be filtered according to who they are from. In fact, if you have

multiple messages selected, Mail Act-On will file each individually and report how many messages matched each rule. Note that rule order may be important in these situations.

Where can I find more tips to use Mail Act-On.
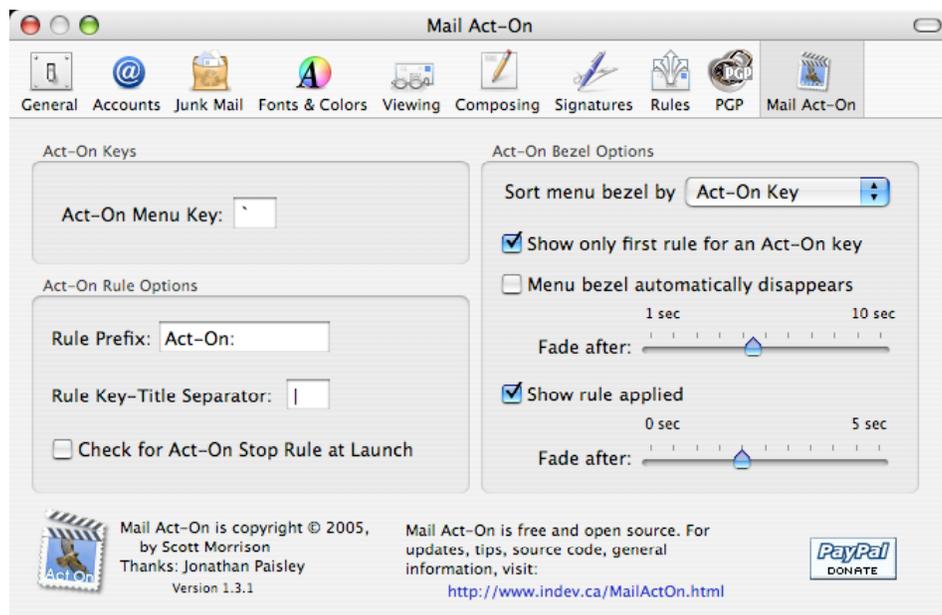> *At our tips page of course! http://www.indev.ca/MailActOnTips.html*

Mail Act-On preferences

Can I change the key that displays the Act-On menu?
> *Yes, change the Act-On Menu Key in the Mail Act-On preferences*

Can I change the prefix or the delimiter for an Act-On rule?
> *Yes, change the Rule prefix or "Rule Key-Title Separator" in the Mail Act-On preferences*

Can I remove the need for the control key or change the modifier key for immediate Act-On rule application to something other than the control key?

No. However, Act-On keys are case sensitive and option keys may be used in conjunction with the control key. We also decided to require the control key to avoid conflicts with other mail plug-ins such as Ken Ferry's type select plug-in.

Can I turn off the result window that appears after I perform an Act-On rule?

Yes, turn the check for the Show rule applied box off. You can also adjust the fade time for the bezel window

Contacting the Developers

I have a bug or compatibility issue I wish to report or a feature suggestion. Who do I contact?

Thank you for your reports in advance. You can file the bug report yourself on our trac system at http://trac.selwyn.ca/projects/MailActOn/newticket.

Please include your email address so we can follow up your report if need be. (Note: your email will be reported publicly on the tracking system) Alternatively, you can just email me directly at smorr@indev.ca.

Can I get involved with future Mail Act-On development?

Mail Act-On is an open source project and we welcome contributions and new people on the project team. You can freely and anonymously download the source code from our subversion host (svn://trac.Selwyn.ca/MailActOn/) If you make changes, please contribute them to the project by send us a patch file. If you want to be more involved, email me.

Who do I thank for Mail Act-On and how can I show support for its future development?

Scott Morrison started developing Mail Act-On in April 2005 to address his own desires for a more flexible mail client and partly to learn Obj-C and Cocoa development. In open source spirit, Jonathan Paisley became a main contributor early in May 2005.

If you find that Mail Act-On is indispensable and you can't imaging using Mail without it, please show us your support with a donation. You can make a donation by clicking on the paypal icon on the Mail Act-On preference panel.