

Apply global custom views in Microsoft Outlook 2003

Takeaway: There is no obvious way to apply a custom view globally to all the folders in Outlook 2003. But it can be done, and this Solutions Base article will show you how.

Problem

Microsoft Outlook 2003 has many "features" designed to make the user experience more pleasant, such as AutoPreview, Reading Panes, and Group-By settings. However, many users prefer the less feature-laden interface of Outlook versions past. For the traditionalist, the features equate to clutter that needs to be removed.

Unfortunately, and inexplicably, changing the current view settings in all Outlook 2003 folders at once is not as intuitive as it should be. Outlook 2003 implies that users will have to separately change the view for each individual folder. Changing the parameters of the Current View would seem to be your best choice for achieving a global change, but the changes do not translate to all of the Outlook folders.

However, there is in fact a way to get your preferred settings applied to all folders. It is one of those odd user-discovered tricks that work, but defy rational explanation.

Solution 1

The steps outlined here will turn off AutoPreview, Reading Panes, and all Group-By settings. Keep in mind that you can use this method to apply other changes based on your personal preferences.

1. Create a Shortcut for OUTLOOK.EXE and place it on the Desktop.
2. Edit the Shortcut properties and add the `/cleanviews` switch to the target line so it looks something like this:

```
"C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\OFFICE11\OUTLOOK.EXE" /cleanviews
```

3. Start Outlook using the shortcut.
4. Select the Inbox folder.
5. Navigate the menus to View | Arrange By | Current Views | Define View.
6. Select Messages and click the Modify button.
7. Click the Group By button and uncheck Automatically Group.
8. Click OK.
9. Click the Other Settings button and set Reading Pane to Off.
10. Click OK, twice.
11. Now this is the tricky part! Click on any other view listed in the dialog box OTHER THAN Messages and click Apply (Last 7 days, for example).
12. Navigate the menus again to View | Arrange By | Current Views | Define View.
13. Now choose Messages and click Apply.

Your new custom view will now be applied to all of your Outlook folders. However, this will not happen instantly. It will take some time for Outlook to work its way through your folders. If you have numerous folders and a deep hierarchy, you may have to click on the intended folder, then click another folder, and then click the intended folder again to get your view to display correctly.

Not exactly an elegant solution to be sure, but it has worked in all of the testing we have done at TechRepublic. If you encounter problems, please share it with us in the article discussion; perhaps we can figure out a better solution.

Solution 2

One alternative to the first solution is to use Outlook 2003 command line switches to turn off AutoPreview and the Reading Pane. This solution will remove those features but at the cost of some flexibility--the switches eliminate access to either feature during that Outlook session. Using the same Shortcut from Solution 1, you would change the target line in the properties dialog box to look something like this: