

My Crabby-inspired template

Applies to: Microsoft Office Outlook 2007, Outlook 2003, Outlook 2002

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Crabby Office Lady

You're an original. Now your Outlook out of office message can be, too.

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I've talked to you about the importance of the out of office message (OOF) before:

- In [Crabby's get-away-from-it-all checklist](#) we went over the **Out of Office Assistant** (the feature — when you're using Outlook with Exchange Server — that lets you create a reply message for e-mail sent to you while you're away). I expressed the importance of turning this feature on *before* you leave the office so that the folks you work with won't think you're simply ignoring them.
- Then, in [Plan your summer getaway...and your return](#), I listed a number of other things you need to do to prepare before you go on vacation (setting your OOF being one of them) — and then I took it a step further: I explained why *not* to turn off your OOF right when you return, but to simply alter a bit for a few days, perhaps saying that you've returned but are still catching up on things.

So, we've covered the *whys* of the out of office message. But what about the message itself? When you go to create your OOF message (using the **Out of Office Assistant** from the **Tools** menu), sure, you can spruce up your text somewhat with different font styles, colors, and sizes. And maybe that's good enough for you; it's the message that matters, right? Not the packaging, right?

Well...sort of. It depends on who you are and who will be receiving the message. What if you're in marketing or P.R. and you want to display your creativity and panache, right down to your OOF? Or what if you're an artist and the need to express yourself spills over into your out-of-office reply?

Go crazy with your OOF

Now, I'm neither in marketing nor P.R. and I'm no artist. But I always wanted to create something a little different from the pack of out of office messages we all get on a regular basis. So, I came up with a way to customize mine. People here at work started noticing, and then someone from the Templates team suggested I create a template based on my OOF so that anyone could follow suit!



July 4th: I'm out today simply celebrating my freedom. Checking mail periodically.



For urgent Crabby Office Lady issues, take a deep breath and reconsider how pressing speaking with a fictional online character is.

For editorial issues  ?!*!!?  , please contact my editor. 

For issues beyond that (or general praise-singing), contact my manager. 

 Crabby 

 [Columnist/Blogger](#)

And so I did; I created a [Creative out of office message](#) template (my very first *published* template)! I had great fun writing it, and I can also tweak it when I need to. The creative possibilities are endless.

If you've already tried to make the standard out of office message a little snazzier, you already know that doing it from within the Out of Office Assistant feature in Outlook is quite limited. So, if you want to learn how to create your own, download my template and rev up your creative engines. Turn howdy doody into a thing of beauty! And also, don't forget to rate and comment.

Send me your best work at crabby@microsoft.com.

"Good taste is the enemy of creativity." — Pablo Picasso

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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