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Attachments in Outlook 2010

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Microsoft MVP for Word.

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Introduction

For those of us using the keyboard and/or adaptive technology such as a screen reader or Text-to-Speech tool, finding and opening attachments in Outlook can be puzzling.

If you are using HTML or Plain Text format, there is an attachment field that appears just above the body of the message. Attachments are treated differently if your message is written in RTF or "Rich Text Format." When you use RTF the attachments are embedded in the main body of the message and can appear anywhere in the body of the message. They are not confined to the top or bottom of the message. Basically they will appear wherever the author's cursor was when they decided to attach a file.

Screen Reading Layout

The first thing you'll want to do in Outlook is to go into Word and turn off Screen Reading Layout. I know this is an odd recommendation but it will save you a lot of headaches when opening Word attachments from Outlook.

Screen Reading Layout is a replacement for the old Reading Layout of Office 2003. It is an inaccessible view of the document and will not work with adaptive technology.

To turn off Screen Reading Layout:

1. Launch Word.
2. Press Alt + F, T for File/Backstage area, Word Options.
    a. When the Word Options dialog opens your focus should be on the Popular category.
3. Press Tab to move into the Popular category settings.
4. Press Alt + F to uncheck "Open Outlook attachments in full screen reading view.
    a. Using Alt + F will move you to the check box and uncheck it automatically since it is checked. If you press Alt + F again, the check box will be checked.
    b. You can Tab to the check box and then use the Spacebar to either check or uncheck it if you want to review your choices. This is the typical behaviour for all check boxes: you can either move to them and use the Spacebar or use the keyboard commands to move to them and reverse their state.
5. This will also affect any documents set to open in full screen reading view.
6. Move to and activate the OK button.

Preview Mode

If you are saving Office documents through Outlook 2010, once you open them they are in Preview mode. Preview mode is a way of letting you review documents without editing them. This will also help with any documents you accidentally open that might have macros in them that might affect your computer.

If you are using a screen reader, you will notice that you can't do anything with the document and once you go to the File/Backstage area and the Info tab, you will only have one option available and that is to turn off Preview mode.

Visually there is a yellow information bar that appears just above the main document. You can press F6 to move from the document to the information bar to double check whether the document is in protected mode or not. When you do this, your focus is on the "Enable Editing" button. Press the Spacebar to be able to edit the document and confirm that this is what you want to do. The information bar disappears. There is an X in the information bar to the far right. You can Tab to this and press the Spacebar to close the information bar but this will not put you out of Preview mode.

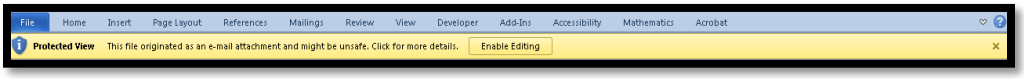

Figure 1 Yellow information band telling you the document is in Preview mode.

The other way to exit Preview mode is to go into the Info tab in the File Backstage area. Press Alt + F, letter I, E to exit Preview mode.

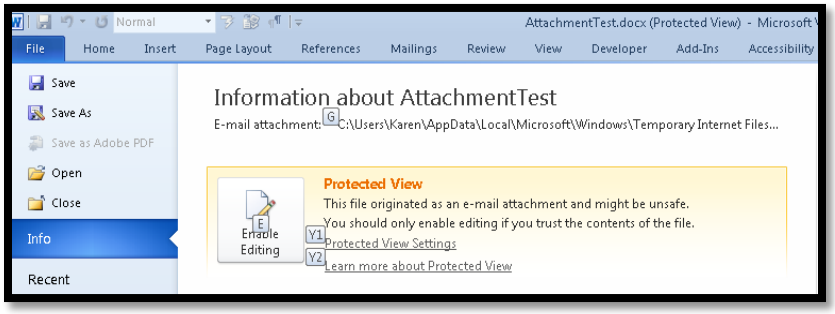

Figure 2 File/Backstage area showing document protected.

Once you exit Preview mode, you'll have access to the other tools under the Info tab such as inspecting the document, accessing previously unsaved versions of your document and the document properties.

File/Backstage Area in Outlook

The fastest way to save attachments in Outlook 2010 is to use the File/Backstage area. The keyboard command is Alt + F, M. If you are not using a screen reader, you will see a small paper clip next to a post with an attachment. If you are using a screen reader, your screen reader should tell you that there are attachments to a post as you go down the list of messages.

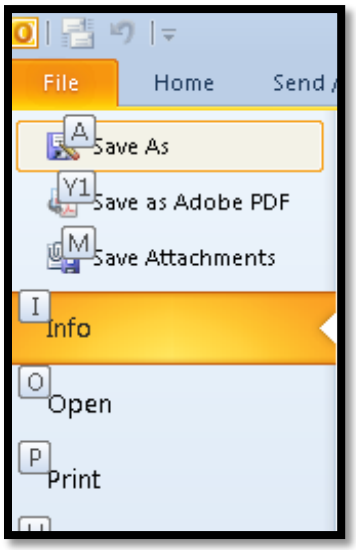

Figure 3 Save Attachments from the File/Backstage area of Outlook 2010.

Once the Save Attachments dialog opens, focus will be on the OK button. All of the attachments will be selected and if you press Enter or the Spacebar on the OK button, the Save As dialog will open and you will be able to save all the attachments at once to the same location (usually your Documents folder).

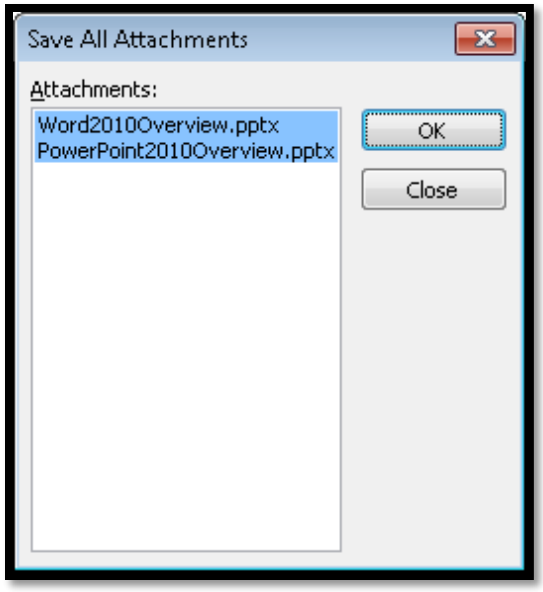

Figure 4 Save Attachments dialog with all attachments selected.

To move into the list of attachments and choose only one attachment to save, press Shift + Tab. Then use the Up and Down Arrow keys to select the attachment you want to save. You can also click on the attachment if you are mouse dependent.

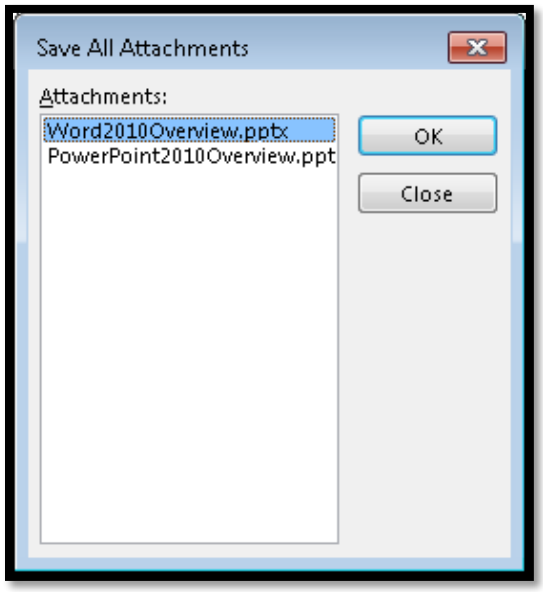

Figure 5 One document selected to be saved in the Save Attachments dialog.

Once you've decided on the attachment or attachments to save, move to and activate the OK button by pressing the Enter key.

The Save As dialog will open. If you've chosen to save all attachments the filename edit area will be blank. Your focus will be on the Save button so you can press Enter to save all selected attachments. If you want to change the location, remember to do this before you activate the Save button.

Finding Attachments from an Open e-mail Message

Why would I specify that the e-mail message must be open? One of the things I try to do is to provide keyboard commands for anything I write about in my documents. If I am previewing a message in the Reading Pane, there is no easy way to get to the header fields (To, CC, BCC or Attachments) using the keyboard. It is easier to get to those message elements from an open e-mail message. Of course, if you are mouse dependent, you can click or right-click on these areas of a message in the Reading Pane.

1. From the Inbox or the Mail Folder Containing the list of messages, press Enter to open an e-mail message with an attachment.
    a. Your cursor will be on the first line of the message just below the header information for the e-mail. The header information is the list of attachments, the BCC, CC Subject and To fields.
2. Press Shift + Tab to move to the attachments area of the e-mail. The attachments list is just above the main body of the e-mail message.
    a. Your focus will be on text just before the list of attachments which visually go across the top of your mail message.
3. You can then use the Arrow keys to move among attachments.
    a. Use the Left and Right Arrow keys but if there are a lot of attachments, you can use the Up and Down Arrow keys. If there are only a few attachments, you won't be able to use the Up or Down Arrow keys to move through the attachments.
4. Press Enter on an attachment you want to open.
5. If it is an Office document, you'll then have to press Alt + F, letter I, E once the document opens as it will be in Protected view.

Press Escape on the e-mail post to close the post and return to Outlook. Your attachment will still be open.

If you want to save an attachment from an open e-mail message without reviewing it first, you can choose to press the AppKey (located to the immediate left of the Ctrl key on the right side of the main keyboard area instead of opening the attachment.

Figure 6 AppKey on a standard keyboard.

The AppKey has two little square applications on it. Pressing the AppKey opens a context menu which gives you the option to save the attachment without opening it. If you choose this option, the document will still open in Protected mode and you will need to press Alt + F, E to turn off Protected mode if the document you are saving is an Office document.

Of course if you are mouse dependent you can right-click on any attachment and choose to save it or open it too.

Reading Pane and Attachments

I haven't found a way to open or work with attachments in the Reading Pane. At one time F6 and Shift + F6 would move you forward or backward through the larger pieces of Outlook like the list of messages to the Reading Pane to the To Do Bar to the Status Bar and so forth and using Tab or Shift + Tab would move you forward or backward through the pieces of each larger chunk (the Reading Pane for example). This would let you navigate to the reading Pane using F6 and then use Shift + Tab to move to the Attachments area and work with attachments but this does not work consistently so working with attachments in the Reading Pane with the keyboard is not possible, you have to open the message or use the Save Attachments tool.

However, if you are using the JAWS screen reader, it has a keyboard command to move to the list of attachments in an open message or while you are in the Reading Pane. Press JawsKey + A to move to the Attachment list and then use the Left or right Arrow keys to move through the attachments. Once you find an attachment to open, press Enter; or, press the AppKey to display the context menu and choose to save the attachment.

Attachments in an RTF Message

When you choose RTF or Rich Text Format as the format for your e-mail messages, or you receive a message in RTF format, attachments are embedded in the body of the message instead of in an Attachments field as they are when the message format is either Plain Text or HTML.

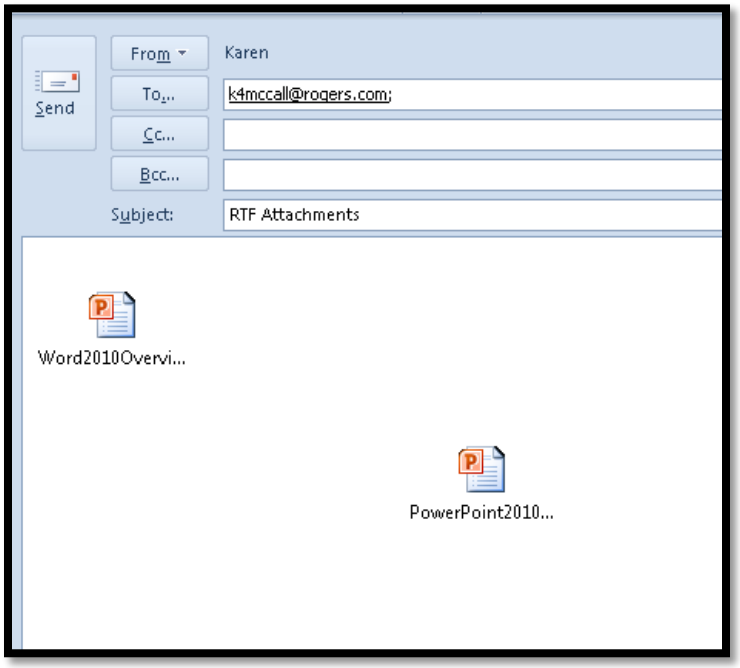

Figure 7 Two attachments in the body of an RTF formatted e-mail message.

The method of using the File/Backstage area and then Save Attachments (Alt + F, M) is a good way to save the attachments if you are not using a screen reader or if your screen reader can't find the attachments embedded in the message body.

If someone is using the JAWS 13 screen reader, JAWS will identify an attachment to you no matter where it is on a line. You do have to go through the message line by line or paragraph by paragraph though.

If a person using JAWS thinks there are attachments, pressing Ctrl + Shift + letter O will open a list of objects in the post and you can navigate to an object/file and you can press Enter on it to open it. This is a JAWS keyboard command and not available to everyone. If you are using a different screen reader, check your Help documentation to see if there is a similar keyboard command. (You can use this keyboard command in Microsoft Word as well.)

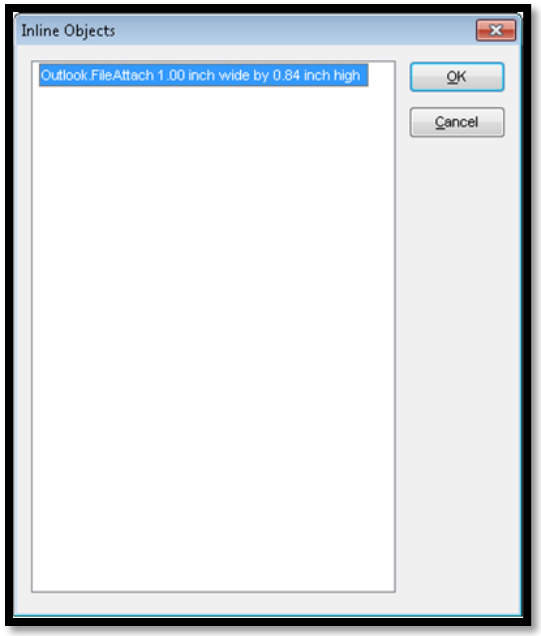

Figure 8 List of objects in an e-mail message using the JAWS screen reader.

Even if the attachment or “embedded object” is not against the left margin, getting the list of objects from the JAWS screen reader will let you find it.

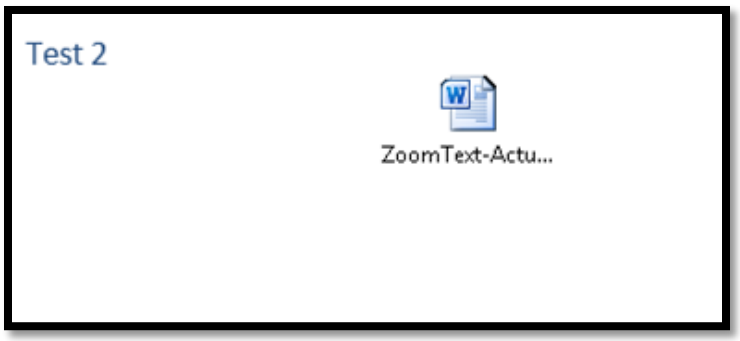

Figure 9 Embedded object/attachment in an RTF formatted e-mail.

If you are moving through your RTF message line by line or paragraph by paragraph, once you locate an attachment, press Shift + Right Arrow to select it, press the AppKey to open the context menu and choose Open or Save As.

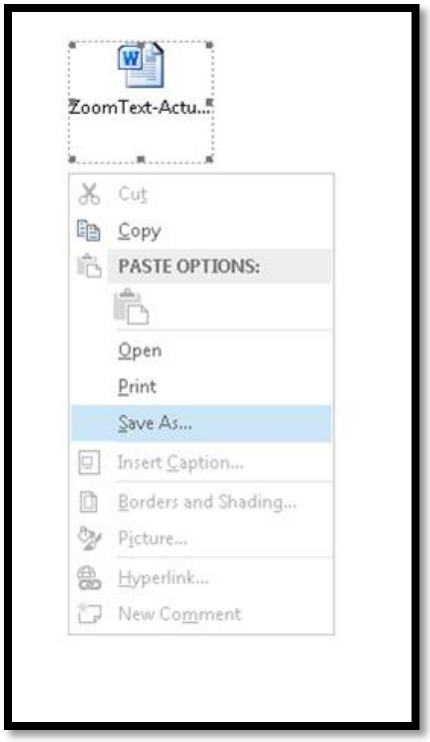

Figure 10 object/attachment in an RTF formatted e-mail message.

The message can be reviewed in the Reading Pane or by opening the message. In either case, using the JAWS keyboard command for listing objects will work as will selecting the embedded documents and either right-clicking on them or using the AppKey.