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## How do I read local email in thunderbird?

I just install postfix and configured it for local email only as a way to have a sendmail program and test my PHP scripts.

My question is, how can I use an HTML capable email client like Thunderbird to read local (root email, etc.) emails?

thunderbird

edited Mar 12 '15 at 13:23



blade19899

12.4k 15 76 126

asked Sep 24 '12 at 19:10



gsi-frank

566 5 13 31

### 3 Answers

(When I am discussing the setup below, I am using desktop Ubuntu 12.04)

Now that you have installed postfix (it can be reconfigured with `sudo dpkg-reconfigure postfix`) and now there is a file called `main.cf` in `/etc/postfix`, Thunderbird can be set up to read any system emails. **However**, I have found that it often takes a bit more time than has been suggested if you want to both receive *from* and send messages *to* `root@localhost`.

First, as recommended in [this discussion](#) what worked for me was to use postfix's `aliases` feature to allow mail to be redirected; edit the `aliases` file with `sudo nano /etc/aliases` so that it looks like this (replace my user name with your own):

```
postmaster:    root
root:         mike
```

Then run `sudo newaliases` so that the configuration is updated.

As also noted in the [above link](#), you need to create a `.forward` file containing your username and localhost: e.g. `mike@localhost` so that root's mail will be forwarded to you. To do this, enter these commands:

```
sudo touch /root/.forward
```

and then run

```
sudo nano /root/.forward
```

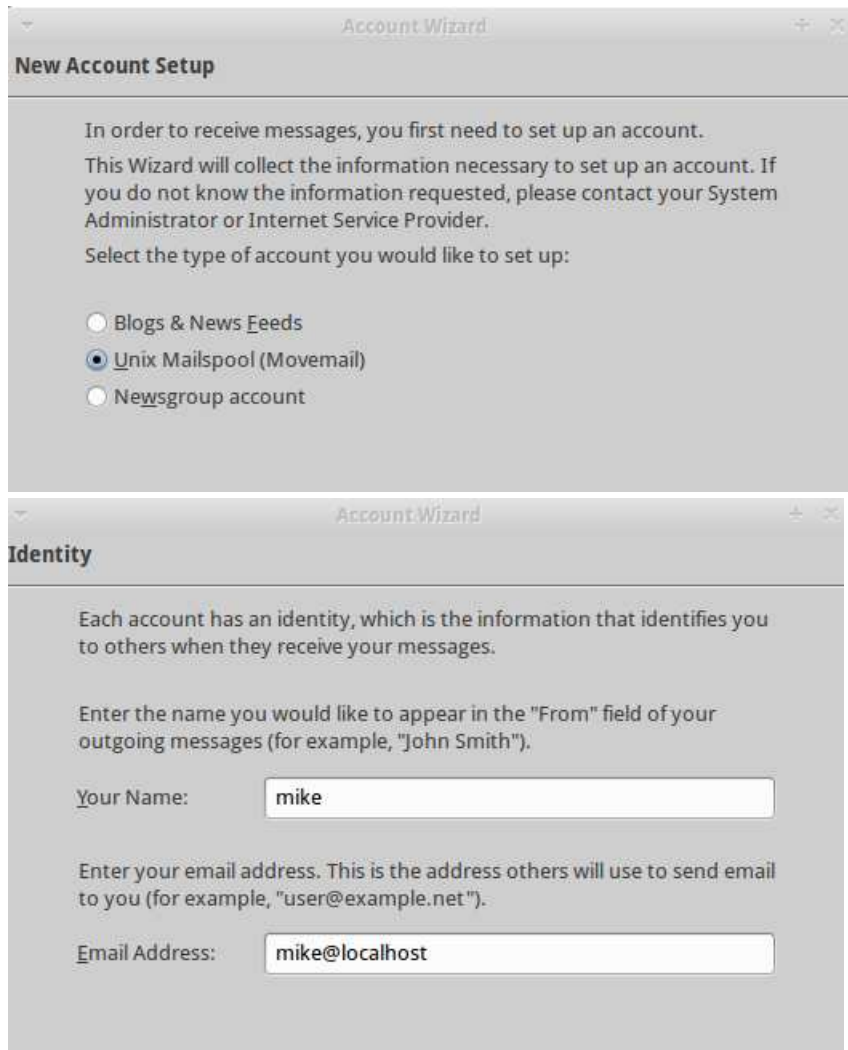
to place your user: e.g. `mike@localhost` in the file and save it.

**In addition**, I found it was necessary to add your user to the mail group so that Thunderbird could access the mail files:

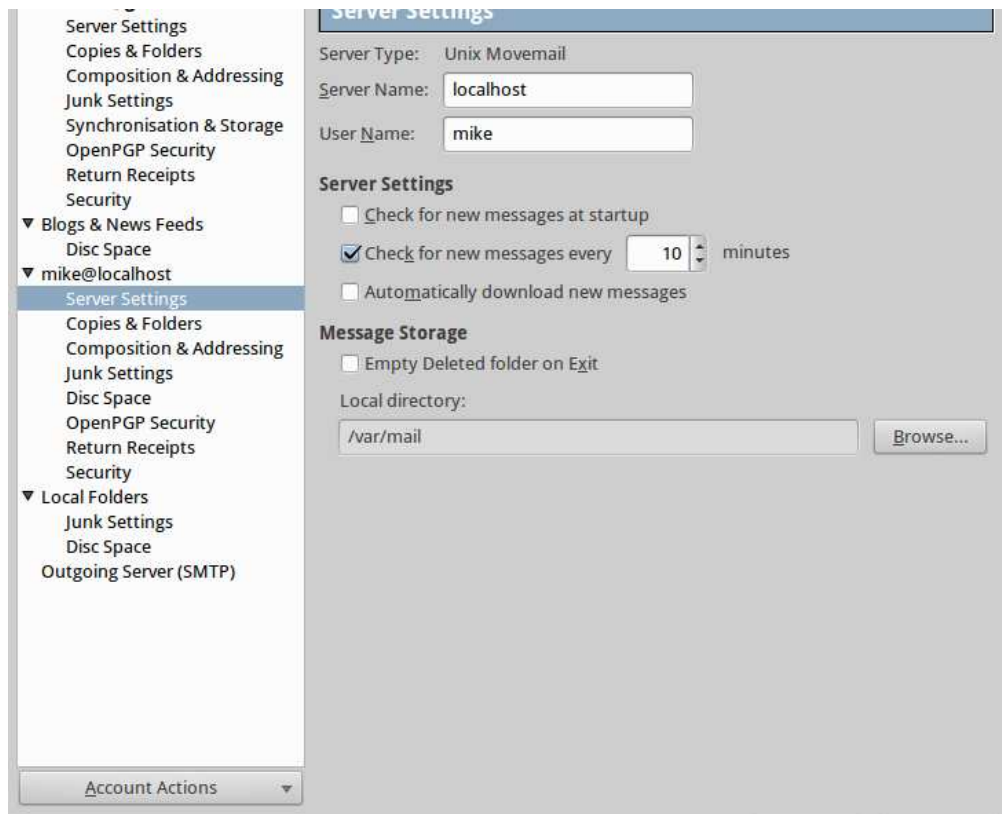
```
sudo adduser $USER mail
```

and then logout and login for the changes to take effect. There is no need to `chown` or `chmod` any files, as some articles might suggest.

Now for the `Thunderbird` configuration. Go to `edit > account settings > account actions > add other account > select Unix spoolmail` and in the next screen put your username in the first box and place `yourusername@localhost` in the second box.

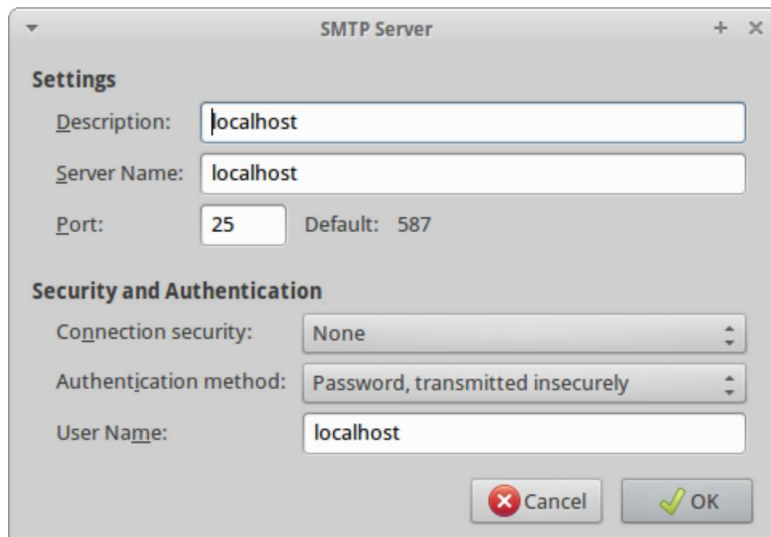


Now, go to your new account in account settings and select server settings and select the local directory as `/var/mail` or `/var/mail/username` (if setup), as in the screenshot below.



As per the instructions [in this article](#) you will need to configure the smtp server if you want to test the account by sending a mail to `root@localhost` and then clicking get mail in Thunderbird to receive it, as root's mail is being redirected to `youruser@localhost`.

Go to account settings > outgoing server and choose to add a new one. The settings should be as in the screenshot below:



Now, finally test your account by composing a mail to `root@localhost` and then a few seconds later clicking get mail on your account. You should see an email like this:



Some programs or logs will need to be configured so that they send mail to root, but that can be decided as you find the need. This article should hopefully be useful as it is not always

straightforward to set up Thunderbird to receive local mail.

edited Oct 12 '12 at 21:50

answered Oct 12 '12 at 21:13

user76204

Excellent! you are great! I just want add this link [serverfault.com/questions/94640/...](http://serverfault.com/questions/94640/) as reference to those who want have a complete local developer environment when doing PHP scripting and want test email feature. – [gsi-frank](#) Oct 24 '12 at 22:27

It would be nice to know, if it is possible to receive all send mails. Because in some environments user@localhost is no valid mail address and can therefore not be used. – [keiki](#) Jul 30 '13 at 12:09

1 Fantastic answer, you nailed it. Wish I could upvote you more! – [eggonlegs](#) Sep 2 '13 at 3:06

Try Edit-> Account Settings and under Account Actions choose "Add Other Account."

Choose "Unix Mailspool (Movemail)" from the list and continue the configuration with your name, account, other settings.

When you "Get Mail" it should look in /var/spool/mail on your system (localhost) for your mail file.

answered Sep 24 '12 at 21:32



[VooDooStevie](#)

111 4

1 I can't found where specify "/var/spool/mail", beside, how can I email to that account to test it? – [gsi-frank](#) Sep 25 '12 at 0:19

Can I uses another email client beside Thunderbird to read /var/mail/USERNAME emails? Take in consideration that I need HTML capable email client. – [gsi-frank](#) Sep 25 '12 at 4:38

Works now, just must replace "@(none)" for "@localhost" in the initial configuration wizard. – [gsi-frank](#) Sep 25 '12 at 5:10

i [find this](#) so much easier:

after installing postfix, you just make a symlink to the local /var/mail/username file inside thunderbird folders.

in short:

Create a subfolder in "Local Folders/Inbox" called "System", or whatever. Exit Thunderbird, move into ~/.thunderbird/xxxx.default/Mail/Local\ Folders/ find the text file called System. Replace it with a symbolic link to /var/mail/username

```
cd /home/pepito/.mozilla-thunderbird/xxxx.default/Mail/Local\ Folders/  
rm System  
ln -s /var/mail/username System
```

(personally, i don't need smtp - so i didn't dig into it.)

answered Jul 14 '14 at 14:33



[Berry Tsakala](#)

86 5