

West Chester Area School District E-Mail Best Practice

Our email system is like most corporate or enterprise systems, as it is designed for internal communications and communication with other individual or small groups of recipients on the Internet. While users can create bulk mail lists for purposes of convenience, lists that include large numbers of outside email recipients can be problematic and should be used with care. Indiscriminate use of external lists raises the likelihood that we can face challenges getting our mail through various spam filtering services. Combine this with one successful phishing attempt we experienced recently resulting in the hijacking of one or more district email accounts, and we face the challenges we've all experienced over the last month.

Our networking team has worked very hard to get the District removed from these spam blacklists. We periodically make technical changes in an attempt to control the flow of mail coming out of our mail servers. For example, automated weekly PowerSchool reports to which parents subscribe will be re-routed to a different domain the District owns, rather than from wcasd.net.

More than 85 percent of email on the Internet worldwide is classified as spam. Another way to think about it is that we block more e-mail than we pass through our filters. There are many factors in play when ending up on one of the spam blacklists, and each spam filtering service weights these factors differently. Also, the weighting can change without notice, depending on changes in email patterns across the Internet.

A Few, Non-Technical Indicators Spam Filters Use to Blacklist an Email Address:

- ✓ Detection of a larger than usual volume of email from a single user or email domain
- ✓ Recipient complaints to their Internet or e-mail service provider
- ✓ No visible way to unsubscribe to a group email

How to Avoid Blacklists in the Future

As a staff, there are some practical steps we can take that are considered best practices. These steps are listed below:

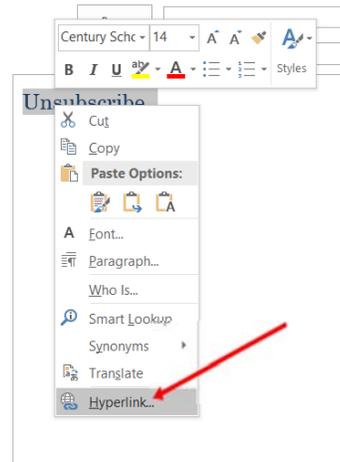
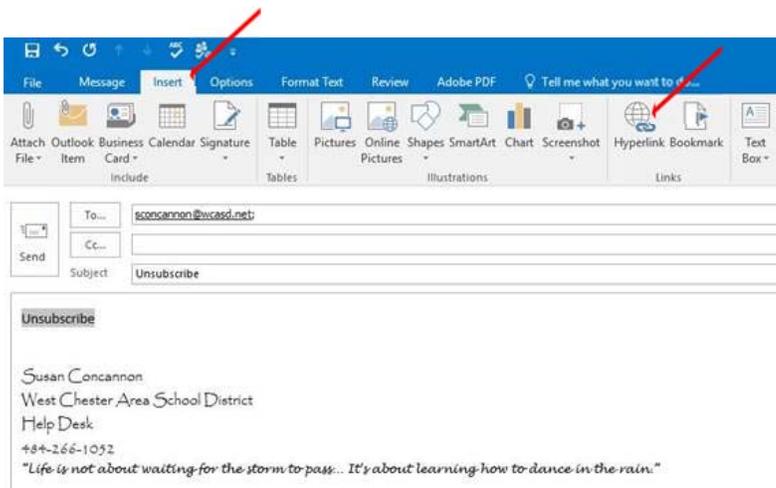
- When sending the same communication to many external, non WCASD recipients using the District's email server, try chunking large into smaller lists and sending the communication over several hours, if possible. If your list is large and out of the norm, coordinate with your school office to have your list uploaded and the message sent through the School Messenger service.
- Make sure your lists are up to date with correct email addresses belonging to recipients you've confirmed want to receive your mail. If you send to the same list without updating it regularly, we are liable to be blacklisted again, and the removal process is not easy. There is no Mr. Hotmail we can call. These blacklists are often automated, managed through algorithms. Recipient complaints increase the likelihood that we will be placed on one or more of the many spam lists to which email providers subscribe.
- Always offer a way to "UNSUBSCRIBE" from mass e-mail blasts. Automated spam filters look for this option. Always honor "unsubscribe" requests in a timely way. Not doing so will be your fastest path to spam complaints (see below).
- Not that this often happens in a school environment but never use purchased lists no matter how tempting it may be. These lists can be riddled with bad addresses and spam traps.
- Most importantly, make sure that your content provides value and is relevant to your recipients.
- NEVER, EVER give up your network credentials to anybody for any reason. Your email could be hijacked and used to send spam, putting the entire District at risk of further email disruptions. Nobody from the WCASD IT Department will ask you for your credentials via email, phone, etc., so don't be fooled by a slick phishing attempt.

How to add Unsubscribe in an Email

Type the word “unsubscribe” in an email and highlight the word:

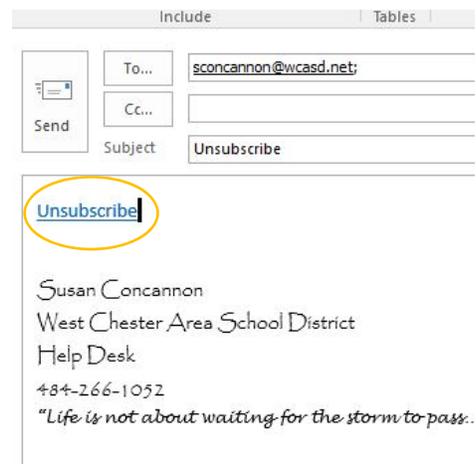
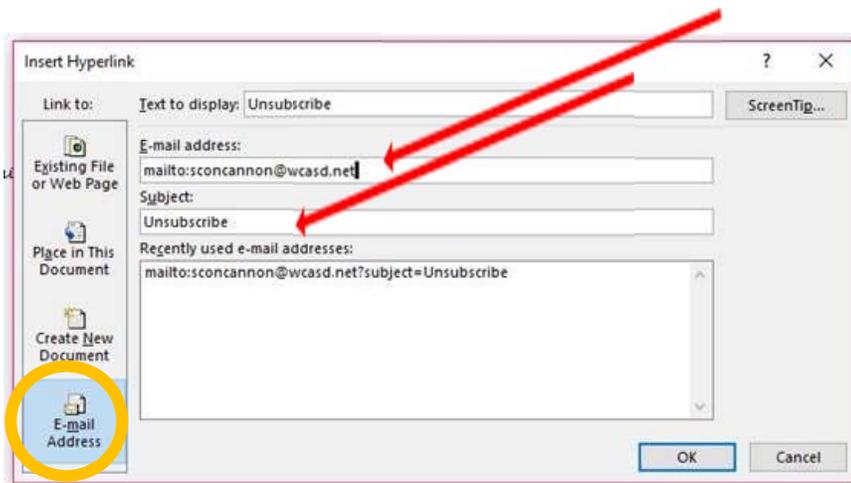


Click on the Insert tab and choose Hyperlink OR right click on the highlighted word and select Hyperlink



OR

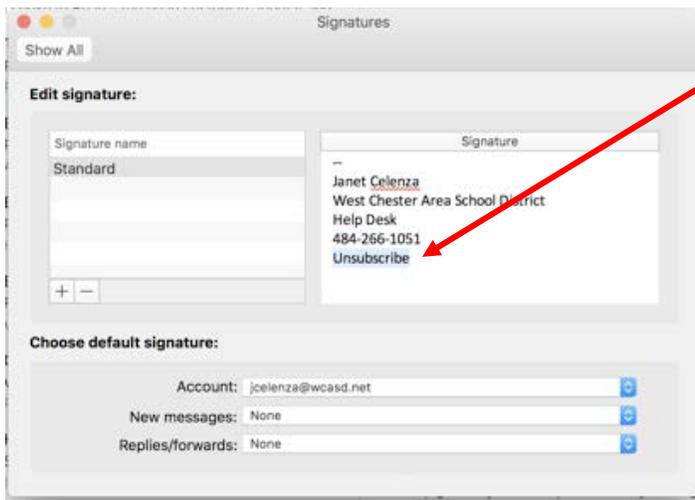
A new window will appear. Select E-mail Address under Link To in the left column, and then click inside the E-mail address field, and start typing your email address. You will notice it automatically fills in “mailto:.” Enter text in the subject line and click OK to get back in your email and you see that the text has turned blue and is now underlined acknowledging that you successfully added the hyperlink.



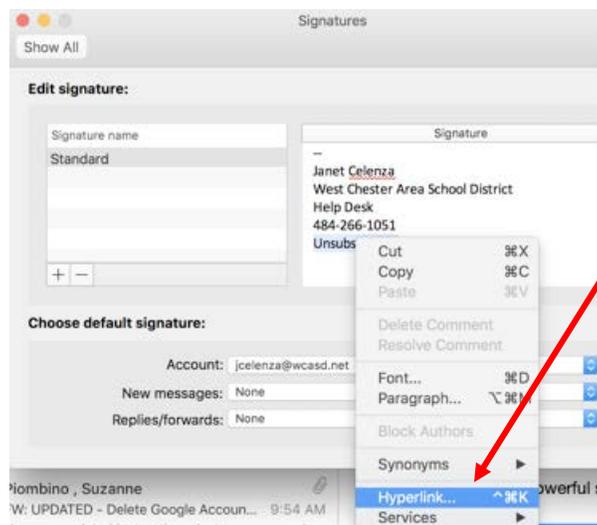
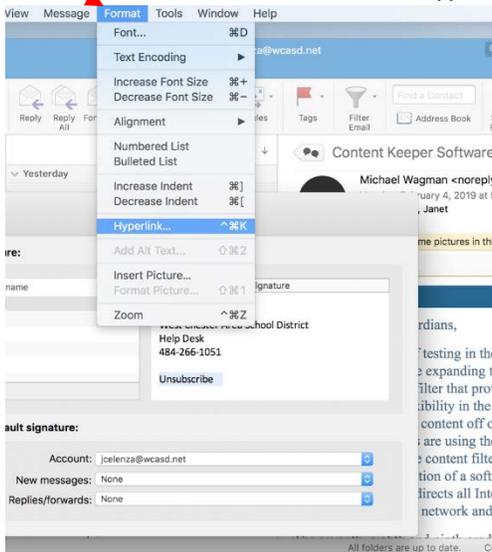
Once the email is sent, the receiver can click that Unsubscribe hyperlink, and it will automatically fill in your email address and subject line so that they can request to be removed from your distribution list.

Outlook for Mac

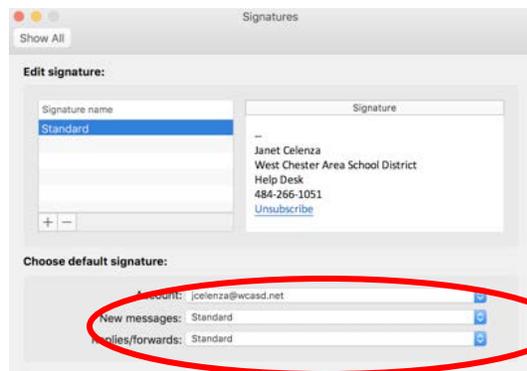
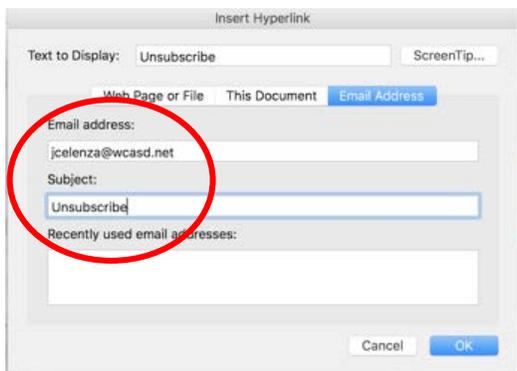
Type the word "Unsubscribe" in your email signature and highlight the word:



Click on the Format tab and select Hyperlink (pictured left) or Right click and select Hyperlink (pictured right).

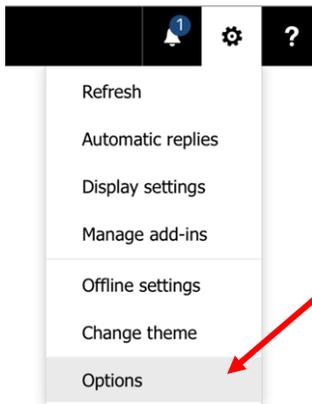
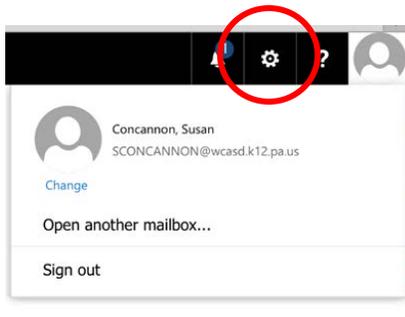


A new window will appear. Select Email Address, then click inside the E-mail address field and type your email address. In the Subject field, type Unsubscribe. Make sure to select the name of your signature for New messages and Replies/Forwards.

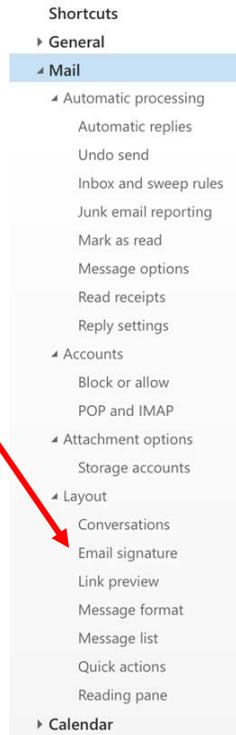


Webmail

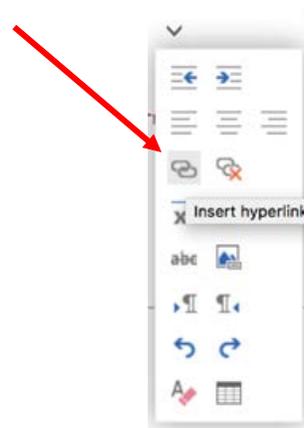
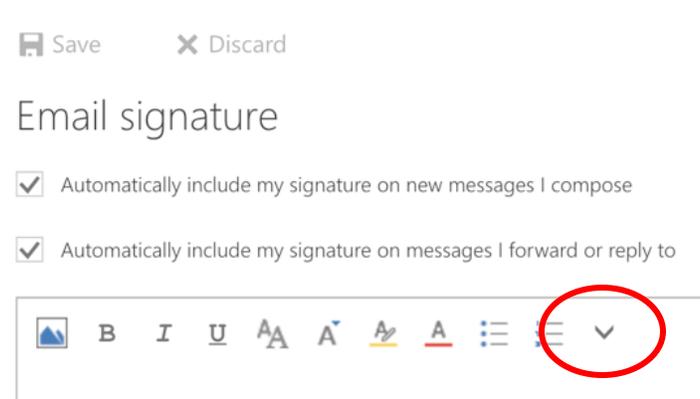
Open your Email signature.



Options



Type the word "Unsubscribe" in your email signature, highlight it and click the down arrow at the top of the window. Then choose Insert Hyperlink.



Then in the next window, type the following exactly as it appears (with your username) including the question mark and the equal sign.

mailto:myusername@wcasd.net?subject=Unsubscribe

Select "Ok".

You will notice the word unsubscribe in blue with each message you send as it is now contained in your signature.

