

# Table of Contents

<b>Mailer Contrib.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
tools/mailnotify.....	1
TWiki/Contrib/MailerContrib code library.....	3
Installation Instructions.....	3
Setting up your cron job(s).....	4
Developer Notes.....	4
Contrib Info.....	5

# Mailer Contrib

Send e-mail notification of changes to topics in TWiki webs

## Introduction

The Mailer Contrib allows users to "subscribe" to regularly scheduled e-mails containing either:

- A report on changes to all topics that have changed within a particular TWiki web.
- A report on changes to a specific topic or set of topics the user can define flexibly.
- The entire content of a specific topic or set of topics. This is referred to as "news mode."
- The companion plugin (TWiki:Plugins.SubscribePlugin ) lets you trivially add a "Subscribe to changes" button to topics

## tools/mailnotify

The central component of MailerContrib is a script, `tools/mailnotify`, that generates and sends out the emails based on analysis of

1. users' subscriptions listed in the WebNotify topic in each web, and
2. changes within the respective webs.

This script is designed to be run from `cron` (or an equivalent off-line job scheduler), or from the command-line.

The script collates the changes emails so that each subscriber only receives one changes notification for all changes in all webs in the TWiki. Furthermore, users can elect to receive just summaries of changes, or the entire content of topics that have changed.

Each web can optionally contain a topic called WebNotify.

Users subscribe to email notifications using their WikiName or an alternative email address, and can specify the webs/topics they wish to track, Whole groups of users can also be subscribed for notification.

The general format of a subscription is:

*three spaces* \* *subscriber* [ : *topics* ]

Where *subscriber* can be a WikiName, an E-mail address, or a group name. If *subscriber* contains any characters that are not legal in an email address, then it must be enclosed in 'single' or "double" quotes.

*topics* is an optional space-separated list of topics:

- ... **without** a *Web.* prefix
- ...that exist in this web.

Users may further customize the specific content they will receive using the following controls:

- **Using wild-card character in topic names** - You can use \* in a topic name, where it is treated as a wildcard character . A \* will match zero or more other characters - so, for example, `Fred*` will match all topic names starting with `Fred`, `*Fred` will match all topic names *ending* with `Fred`, and `*` will match *all* topic names.

- **Unsubscribing to specific topics** - Each topic may optionally be preceded by a '+' or '-' sign. The '+' sign means "subscribe to this topic". The '-' sign means "unsubscribe" or "don't send notifications regarding this particular topic". This allows users to elect to filter out certain topics. Topic filters ('-') take precedence over topic includes ('+') i.e. if you unsubscribe from a topic it will cancel out any subscriptions to that topic.
- **Including child-topics in subscription** - Each topic may optionally be followed by an integer in parentheses, indicating the depth of the tree of children below that topic. Changes in all these children will be detected and reported along with changes to the topic itself. *Note* This uses the TWiki "Topic parent" feature.
- **Subscribing to entire topic ("news mode")** - Each topic may optionally be immediately followed by an exclamation mark ! and/or a question mark ? with no intervening spaces, indicating that the topic (and children if there is a tree depth specifier as well) should be mailed out as **complete topics** instead of change summaries. ! causes the full topic to be mailed every time *even if there have been no changes*, and ? will mail the full topic only if there have been changes. One can limit the content of the subscribed topic to send out by inserting %STARTPUBLISH% and %STOPPUBLISH% markers within the topic. Note that "news mode" subscriptions require a corresponding cron job that includes the "-news" option (see details).

Examples: Subscribe Daisy to all changes to topics in this web.

```
* daisy.cutter@flowers.com
```

Subscribe Daisy to all changes to topics that start with Web.

```
* daisy.cutter@flowers.com : Web*
```

Subscribe Daisy to changes to topics starting with Petal, and their immediate children, WeedKillers and children to a depth of 3, and all topics that match start with Pretty and end with Flowers e.g. PrettyPinkFlowers

```
* DaisyCutter: Petal* (1) WeedKillers (3) Pretty*Flowers
```

Subscribe StarTrekFan to changes to all topics that start with Star **except** those that end in Wars, sInTheirEyes or shipTroopers.

```
* StarTrekFan: Star* - *Wars - *sInTheirEyes - *shipTroopers
```

Subscribe Daisy to the full content of NewsLetter whenever it has changed

```
* daisy@flowers.com: NewsLetter?
```

Subscribe buttercup to NewsLetter and its immediate children, even if it hasn't changed.

```
* buttercup@flowers.com: NewsLetter! (1)
```

Subscribe GardenGroup (which includes Petunia) to all changed topics under AllnewsLetters to a depth of 3. Then unsubscribe Petunia from the ManureNewsLetter, which she would normally get as a member of GardenGroup:

```
* GardenGroup: AllNewsLetters? (3)
* petunia@flowers.com: - ManureNewsLetter
```

Subscribe IT:admins (a non-TWiki group defined by an alternate user mapping) to all changes to Web\* topics.

```
* 'IT:admins' : Web*
```

A user may be listed many times in the WebNotify topic. Where a user has several lines in WebNotify that all match the same topic, they will only be notified about *changes* that topic *once* (though they will still receive individual mails for news topics).

If a *group* is listed for notification, the group will be recursively expanded to the e-mail addresses of all members.

**Warning:** Because an email address is not linked to a user name, there is no way for TWiki to check access controls for subscribers identified by email addresses. A subscriber identified by an email address alone will only be sent change notifications if the topic they are subscribed to is readable by guest users. You can limit what email addresses can be used in %NOTIFYTOPIC%, or even block use of emails altogether, using the {MailerContrib}{EmailFilterIn} setting in =configure.

**Tip:** List names in alphabetical order to make it easier to find the names.

In the future it is intended that individual users will be able to control the frequency with which they are notified of topic changes, by changing a schedule specification in their home topic. However at present, the notification schedule is controlled by the frequency of activation of the `cron` job that runs the `mailnotify` script.

Note that when using the "news mode" ! or ? specifiers the entire topic text is mailed out as HTML. The `newsletter` template is used to generate the content in this mail, using whatever skin is selected in the topic being mailed.

In addition, the %STARTPUBLISH% and %STOPPUBLISH% markers used by TWiki:Plugins.PublishContrib to delimit the text to be published are respected in news mode.

## TWiki/Contrib/MailerContrib code library

The second part of the module is a code library that provides the services for other applications to modify the subscription topics through a clean, well documented API. This allows (for example) plugin developers to add (for example) a "Register me for this newsletter" button to their pages. Developers should refer to the POD documentation for the WebNotify class as their starting point.

## Installation Instructions

You do not need to install anything in the browser to use this extension. The following instructions are for the administrator who installs the extension on the server where TWiki is running.

Like many other TWiki extensions, this module is shipped with a fully automatic installer script written using the BuildContrib.

- If you have TWiki 4.2 or later, you can install from the `configure` interface (Go to Plugins->Find More Extensions)
  - ◆ See the installation supplement on TWiki.org for more information.
- If you have any problems, then you can still install manually from the command-line:
  1. Download one of the `.zip` or `.tgz` archives
  2. Unpack the archive in the root directory of your TWiki installation.
  3. Run the installer script (`perl <module>_installer`)
  4. Run `configure` and enable the module, if it is a plugin.
  5. Repeat for any missing dependencies.
- If you are **still** having problems, then instead of running the installer script:
  1. Make sure that the file permissions allow the webserver user to access all files.

2. Check in any installed files that have existing `,v` files in your existing install (take care **not** to lock the files when you check in)
3. Manually edit `LocalSite.cfg` to set any configuration variables.

- To make sure the installation was successful, run the `mailnotify` script from the command line, with no parameters. In this case it will print out what it would have done to `STDOUT`.

### Additional settings

- You can change the regular expression that matches email addresses in `WebNotify` using the `{MailerContrib}{EmailFilterIn}` setting in `=configure`. This allows you to limit the domains to which emails can be sent, or even block email addresses altogether.

## Setting up your cron job(s)

You need to set up a `cron` (or equivalent) job to run the `tools/mailnotify perl` script.

The script is used as follows: `perl -I bin mailnotify [-q] [-news] [ web1 web2 ... webN ]`

<code>bin</code>	path to the TWiki bin directory, so that the script can find the rest of TWiki.
<code>-q</code>	Don't print progress information
<code>-news</code>	Run in "news mode" (process subscriptions that include "!" or "?" following the topic)
<code>web1 web2 ... webN</code>	List of webs to process, separated by spaces or commas. The default is to process all webs. Wildcards (*) are supported.

For example, assuming TWiki was installed at `/usr/local/twiki`, this cron entry:

```
0 0 * * * cd /usr/local/twiki && perl -I bin tools/mailnotify -q Public Private
```

will generate change notifications for the `Public` and `Private` webs every night at midnight. (Google for `crontab` for more information on what all the `0 0 * * *` fields mean)

```
0 0 * * * cd /usr/local/twiki && perl -I bin tools/mailnotify -q -Sandbox
```

will generate change notifications for all webs, except the `Sandbox` web.

```
0 0 * * 0 cd /usr/local/twiki && perl -I bin tools/mailnotify -news
```

will generate newsletters from **all** webs every week on midnight Saturday.

**⚠ Note:** Multiple instances of `mailnotify` script are not allowed to be executed simultaneously. If you need to run the script multiple times with different options, make sure the cron jobs are scheduled so a previous run has finished before the next starts. You can also write a small script that runs `mailnotify` in sequence as described in `TWiki:Support.DuplicateNotificationsFromMailerCon` .

## Developer Notes

The changes mails sent to subscribers are based on a TWiki template called `mailnotify`. This template must contain the following definitions.

<code>HTML:before</code>	Section of a HTML mail before the changes
<code>HTML:middle</code>	Repeated in a HTML mail for each change
<code>HTML:after</code>	Section of a HTML mail after the changes
<code>PLAIN:before</code>	Section of a plain text mail before the changes

PLAIN:middle	Repeated in a plain text mail for each changes
PLAIN:after	Section of a plain text mail after the changes
MailNotifyBody	All the above are embedded in this. %HTML_TEXT% expands to the HTML obtained by expanding the HTML: * templates, and %PLAIN_TEXT% from the PLAIN: * templates.

The default template sends multipart mails containing both HTML and plaintext versions. You can easily provide a custom version of this template using a local skin.

Newsletters are sent after formatting using the standard view template, using whatever skin is selected in the topic being mailed.

## Contrib Info

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- Wind River
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Change History:	
2011-07-08:	TWikibug:Item6725 : Change global package variables from "use vars" to "our" -- TWiki:Main.PeterThoeny
2010-07-09:	TWikibug:Item6518 - Fix for notification e-mail showing %MAKETEXT{"Web"} in subject
2010-06-12:	TWikibug:Item6489 - Separate WIKITOOLNAME from WEB name; escape WEB name to avoid auto-linking in case web is WikiWord
2010-05-26:	TWikibug:Item6474 - Fix for mailnotify failing due to non-existing _alert method
2010-05-21:	TWikibug:Item6433 - more doc fixes
2010-04-25:	TWikibug:Item6433 - doc fixes, no code changes
15 Oct 2008	TWikibug:Item : generalised code to enable TWiki:Codev.SubscribePlugin to delegate parsing to MailerContrib - TWiki:Main.SvenDowideit
14 Oct 2008	TWikibug:Item6066 : fixed issue for user mappings where cuid = login - TWiki:Main.SvenDowideit
27 Aug 2008	TWikibug:Item5949 : fixed problem with unsubscribe that should result in an empty subscription
03 Aug 2008	TWiki 4.2.1 release version
27 Jul 2008	TWikibug:Item5776 : TWiki:Main.KennethLavrson added note to warn against running multiple instances of mailnotify at the same time.
15 May 2008	TWikibug:Item5232 : TWiki:Main.CrawfordCurrie added support for non-ascii alphanumerics in topic names to WebNotify. TWikibug:Item5630 : TWiki:Main.SvenDowideit fixed some spelling errors
25 Jan 2008	TWikibug:Item4812 : added TWiki:Main.BobGoldstein's noexpand patch for groups
2 Nov 2007	TWikibug:Item4818 : added quotes to support non-alphabetic and other wierd group names TWikibug:Item4887 : corrected minor rendering error TWikibug:Item4917 : removed dependence on symbolic web names
9 Sep 2007	TWikibug:Item4326 workaround for possible error in WebNotify API in old releases, Should not affect most users.

MailerContrib < TWiki < TWiki

6 Sep 2007	14550	TWikibug:Item4488	doc tweaks
	14550	TWikibug:Item4461	- 'Changed' link now points to most recent changes, not the entire history
22 Jun 2007		TWikibug:Item4284	- added access control checks and email filter
21 May 2007		TWikibug:Item3969	- 8bit email fix (TWiki:Main.WillNorris )
	13623	TWikibug:Item4014	no changes was resetting the notify time to 0. Thanks to TWiki:Main.JeffCrawford for nailing this down.
	12496	TWikibug:Item3415	mailnotify did not send notifications to intranet users because of wrong call to findUser.
	11672	Added newsletter support, after much harassment from TWiki:Main.LynnwoodBrown	
	11534	TWikibug:Item2153	Clarified docs. TWikibug:Item2698 Improved error reporting.
	8808	TWikibug:Item1654	mailnotify must enter the command_line context
	8625	TWikibug:Item1508	Making the dashes in the separator clearer
	8606	TWikibug:Item1508	MailerContrib: Brushing up HTML mailnotify template
	8602	TWikibug:Item1508	MailerContrib: Cleaning up plaintext e-mail template, removing TEXTAREA
	8522	TWikibug:Item1511	arguments to getScriptUrl in wrong order ☹
	8434	TWikibug:Item1465	Fix 'TWiki.' to '%TWIKIEB%.'
	8398	TWikibug:Item1460	polished up the comment a bit
	8308	TWikibug:Item1362	moving mailnotify cron script
	7848	TWikibug:Item1167	forced all mail operations to generate absolute URLs
	7568	TWikibug:tem910	use SCRIPTURL{view} instead of complex url expr
	6864	TWikibug:tem624	mailer templates moved the the right places
	6861	TWikibug:tem624	Added proper templates support for plain text mails
	6809	TWikibug:tem623	don't print anything if verbosity is switched off.
	6659	TWikibug:tem528	Updated MailerContrib. it's working and the sendmail parameter is used.
	6474	TWikibug:tem420	removed spurious remove_obsolete_locks from MailerContrib
	5924	TWikibug:tem153	fix mail URL-fixing scheme
	5269	Minor doc fixes	
	5266	Doc tidy-ups, added filtering of _ webs, added obsolete lock script	
	5264	Changed default to add web name to user name (I hope)	
	5263	Minor doc tidyups	
	5261	Documentation changes, and fixed to scan all webs.	
	5253	runnable as CGI script, minor bugfixes, removed dependency on DBCacheContrib	
	5234	Minor doc changes	
	5231	Made a change an object, added unit tests to CVS, lots of testing.	
4 March 2005	1.010 Dakar release ready.		
12 Oct 2004	1.004 Added support for anti-subscriptions. Doc fixes from TWiki:Main.PeterThoeny . Bug fixes to permissions code. Back-off and retry if the mailer can't be reached (should really be in Net::sendEmail)		
6 Oct 2004	1.003 Excluded _ webs from processing, added bin/remove_obsolete_locks for full reverse-compatibility		
1 Oct 2004	1.002 PeterThoeny provided additional documentation		
27 Sep 2004	1.001 runnable as CGI script, minor bugfixes, removed dependency on DBCacheContrib		
8 Sep 2004	1.000 Initial version		
Home:	<a href="http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContrib">http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContrib</a>		
Feedback:	<a href="http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContribDev">http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContribDev</a>		
Appraisal:	<a href="http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContribAppraisal">http://TWiki.org/cgi-bin/view/Plugins/MailerContribAppraisal</a>		

**Related Topics:** TWikiPreferences

This topic: TWiki > MailerContrib

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**Note:** Please contribute updates to this topic on TWiki.org at TWiki:TWiki.MailerContrib.