

## EarthLink MailBox User Interface Text (Samples)

### Introduction

This document features samples of UI text I created for EarthLink MailBox, an Windows email client. It also describes challenges I faced and explains my solutions to those challenges.



### Product Description

MailBox is a POP/IMAP client. In addition to the standard features found in most email programs, MailBox includes some EarthLink-specific features, such as integration with EarthLink's server-based spamBlocker service.

### Target Audience

The primary audience is EarthLink customers, who have access to all of MailBox's features (such as spamBlocker integration). The secondary audience is non-EarthLink Internet users, who have access to all of MailBox's features except for spamBlocker integration.

### UI Text Objectives

The objective was to make the application's button, menu, dialog, and other text intuitive enough that users would be able to use MailBox's features without difficulty.

### My Contribution

Much of the main user interface text was written before I joined the project, so my editorial efforts were centered around features added after I assumed responsibility for MailBox. I wrote UI text in Word for delivery to the engineering team. I also followed the application's development through engineering and usability testing to root out and revise inaccurate, unclear, or otherwise problematic UI text.

## Samples

### Port 587 Message

At the end of the installation process, a message appears (Figure 1) informing users about possible firewall issues that may arise because of the client's default use of port 587 for sending email.

- **The Challenge:** Instituted as an anti-spam measure, MailBox's use of port 587 means that the program might not work as expected for users who have restrictive firewall settings. When the product team decided a warning message about the issue should appear at the end of the installation process, my job was to explain this issue as briefly as possible while still giving users enough information to take further action.
- **My Solution:** With little room to devote to all the details of the issue, I focused on the symptoms users might experience (trouble sending email) and the solution (configuring their firewall), then provided instructions about where users can find more detailed information in the help file.

Figure 1 – Port 587 message during installation.



## ScamBlocker

EarthLink's ScamBlocker service is integrated into the mail client UI, making it possible to alert users about potential phisher scams directly in the message preview pane when an email message is viewed (Figure 2).

- **The Challenge:** Like all anti-phishing tools, ScamBlocker's analysis has a margin of error. The product team wanted me to write alert text that conveyed the need to use caution while also conveying that the email message is not necessarily a threat.
- **My Solution:** This was an unusual case in which vague language was necessary. I wrote text that was appropriate to the alert level but that stopped short of declaring that an affected message is, in fact, a scam. I relied on terms like "suspicious" and "caution" instead of more definitive terms that might turn out to be inaccurate. I also kept the wording consistent across all alert levels, as the medium-level alert (Figure 3) demonstrates.

Figure 2 – ScamBlocker high-level alert.

The screenshot shows an email message with the following details in the header:  
**From:** Jeanine Barry **To:** egosumcignus@earthlink.net **Cc:** jkuhl5@earthlink.net; skeeler@earthlink.net; irio@earthlink.net **Subject:** Re: Account # 91719T

A red banner at the top of the message body reads: **ScamBlocker analyzed this message and found it highly suspicious. Use extreme caution!** It includes links for [View Message Analysis](#) and [Report a Scam](#).

The message body begins with "Dear Homeowner," followed by a large amount of text that appears to be a scam message. A URL at the bottom of the text block is <http://iupbcc12.g0ldmine.net/savings.asp>.

Figure 3 – ScamBlocker medium-level alert.

The screenshot shows an email message with the following details in the header:  
**From:** Lolita Holt **To:** dlafavor@earthlink.com **Subject:** Your account #649T7255

A yellow banner at the top of the message body reads: **ScamBlocker analyzed this message and found some suspicious features. Use caution.** It includes links for [View Message Analysis](#) and [Report a Scam](#).

The message body begins with "NOTICE:" followed by a large amount of text that appears to be a scam message. A URL at the bottom of the text block is <http://iupbcc12.g0ldmine.net/savings.asp>.

## Mail Identity Properties

MailBox supports the creation of multiple “identities,” each with its own separate set of mail folders, contacts, and preferences. Identities can be password-protected for privacy.

- **The Challenge:** The UI designer wanted the password creation dialog (Figure 4) to convey a significant amount of information, including (1) the criteria for a valid password, (2) the purpose for creating a security question, (3) the criteria for a valid security answer, and (4) the importance of keeping a record of the password.
- **My Solution:** With so much to convey, I broke the text up into digestible chunks that followed a logical progression when read from top to bottom. Because the important “warning” paragraph comes late in the progression and risks being overlooked, I used a bold lead-in to help draw the eye toward it.

Figure 4 – Identity password creation dialog.

