

Network Working Group  
Internet Draft: Sieve: Vacation Extension  
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## **Sieve: Vacation Extension**

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### Abstract

This document describes an extension to the Sieve mail filtering language for an autoresponder similar to that of the Unix "vacation" command for replying to messages with certain safety features to prevent problems.

## **1. Introduction**

This is an extension to the Sieve language defined by [\[SIEVE\]](#) for notification that messages will not be immediately answered.

Conventions for notations are as in [\[SIEVE\] section 1.1](#).

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "CAN", and "MAY" in this document are to be interpreted as defined in [\[KEYWORDS\]](#).

## **2. Capability Identifier**

Sieve implementations that implement vacation have an identifier of "vacation" for use with the capability mechanism.

## **3. Vacation Action**

Syntax:   vacation [":days" number] [":addresses" string-list]  
          [":subject" string] [":mime"] <reason: string>

The "vacation" action implements a vacation autoresponder similar to the vacation command available under many versions of Unix. Its purpose is to provide correspondents with notification that the user is away for an extended period of time and that they should not expect quick responses.

"Vacation" is used to respond to a message with another message. Vacation's messages are always addressed to the Return-Path address (that is, the envelope from address) of the message being responded to.

### **3.1. Days Parameter**

The ":days" argument is used to specify the period in which addresses are kept and are not responded to, and is always specified in days. The minimum value used for this parameter is normally 1. Sites MAY define a different minimum value. Sites MAY

also define a maximum days value, which MUST be greater than 7, and SHOULD be greater than 30.

If ":days" is omitted, the default value is either 7 or the minimum value (as defined above), whichever is greater.

If the parameter given to ":days" is less than the minimum value, then the minimum value is used instead.

If `:days` exceeds the site-defined maximum, the site-defined maximum is used instead.

### **3.2. Previous Response Tracking**

"Vacation" keeps track of all of the responses it has sent to each address in some period (as specified by the `:days` optional argument). If vacation has not previously sent the response to this address within that time period, it sends the "reason" argument to the SMTP MAIL FROM address of the message that is being responded to. (The SMTP MAIL FROM address should be available in the Return-path: header field if sieve processing occurs after final delivery.)

Vacation responses are not just per address, but are per address per set of arguments to the vacation command. For instance, If `coyote@desert.example.org` sends mail to `roadrunner@acme.example.com`, once with the subject "Cyrus bug" and once with the subject "come over for dinner", and `roadrunner@acme.example.com` has the script below, `coyote@desert.example.org` would receive two responses, once with the first message, once with the second.

```
Example:  require "vacation";
          if subject :contains "cyrus" {
              vacation "I'm out -- send mail to cyrus-bugs";
          } else {
              vacation "I'm out -- call me at 304 555 1212";
          }
```

In the above example, `coyote@desert.example.org` gets the second message despite having gotten the first one because separate vacation responses have been triggered. This behavior is REQUIRED.

The "per set of arguments" described above is intended to ensure that a resondee gets all of the various possible responses, not merely the first one. So, if the `:subject` or `:mime` parameters would result in a different message, a different message **MUST** be sent by the implementation.

If a script is changed, implementations **MAY** reset the records of

who has been responded to and when they have been responded to. Alternatively, implementations can store records of who has received which message, perhaps by storing a hash of the message and the recipient.

Implementations are free to limit the number of remembered responses, provided the limit is no less than 1000.

Implementations SHOULD make the limit no less than 1000 per vacation command if using the hash algorithm described above. When limiting the number of tracked responses, implementations SHOULD discard the oldest ones first.

#### **3.4. MIME Parameter**

The ":mime" parameter, if supplied, specifies that the reason string is, in fact, a MIME part, including MIME headers (see section 2.4.2.4 of [[SIEVE](#)]).

If the optional :mime parameter is not supplied, the reason string is considered to be a UTF-8 string.

#### **3.6. Address Parameter and Limiting Replies to Personal Messages**

"Vacation" MUST NOT respond to a message unless the user's email address is in the "To", "Cc", "Bcc", "Resent-To", "Resent-Cc", or "Resent-Bcc" line of the original message. Implementations are assumed to know the user's email address, but users may have additional addresses beyond the control of the local mail system.

Users can supply additional mail addresses that are theirs with the ":addresses" argument, which takes a string-list listing additional addresses that a user might have. These addresses are considered in addition to the addresses that the implementation knows.

#### **3.7. Restricting Replies to Automated Processes and Mailing Lists**

Implementations MUST have a list of addresses that "vacation" MUST NOT send mail to. However, the contents of this list are implementation defined. The purpose of this list is to stop mail from going to addresses used by system daemons that would not care if the user is actually reading her mail.

Implementations are encouraged, however, to include well-known addresses like "MAILER-DAEMON", "LISTSERV", "majordomo", and other addresses typically used only by automated systems. Additionally, addresses ending in "-request" or beginning in "owner-", i.e., reserved for mailing list software, are also suggested.

Implementors may take guidance from [[MAILBOXNAMES](#)], but should be careful. Some addresses, like "POSTMASTER", are generally actually managed by people, and people do care if the user is going to be unavailable.

Implementations SHOULD NOT not to respond to any message with a header that begins with "List-".



Implementations SHOULD NOT respond to any message that has an "Auto-submitted" header field with a value other than "no". This header field is described in [\[AUTO\]](#).

### **[3.8.](#) Interaction with Other Sieve Actions**

Vacation does not affect the implicit keep.

Vacation can only be executed once per script. If vacation is used with another vacation, the script fails.

Implementations MUST NOT consider vacation used with discard, keep, fileinto, or redirect an error.

### **[3.9.](#) Examples**

Here is a simple use of vacation.

Example:

```
require "vacation";
vacation :days 23 :addresses ["tjs@example.edu",
                              "ts4z@landru.example.edu"]
    "I'm away until October 19.
    If it's an emergency, call 911, I guess." ;
```

By mingling vacation with other rules, users can do something more selective.

```
Example: require "vacation";
if header :contains "from" "boss@example.edu" {
    redirect "pleeb@isp.example.org";
} else {
    vacation "Sorry, I'm away, I'll read your
    message when I get around to it.";
}
```

## **[4.](#) Response Message Generation**

This section details the requirements for the generated response message.

It is worth noting that the input message and arguments may be in UTF-8, and that implementations MUST deal with UTF-8 input, although implementations MAY transcode to other character sets as regional taste dictates.

#### [4.1.](#) SMTP MAIL FROM address

The SMTP MAIL FROM address of the message envelope SHOULD be set to <>. NOTIFY=NEVER SHOULD also be set in the RCPT TO line during the SMTP transaction if possible.

#### [4.2.](#) Subject Parameter

Users can specify the subject of the reply with the ":subject" parameter. If the :subject parameter is not supplied, then the subject is generated as follows: The subject is set to the characters "Re: " followed by the original subject with all leading occurrence of the characters "Re: " stripped off.

#### [4.3.](#) In-Reply-To and References

Replies MUST have the In-Reply-To field set to the Message-ID of the original message, and the References field must be updated with the Message-ID of the original message.

If the original message lacks a Message-ID, an In-Reply-To need not be generated, and References need not be changed.

#### [4.4.](#) From

The From field SHOULD be set to the address of the owner of the Sieve script.

#### [4.5.](#) To

The To field SHOULD be set to the address of the recipient of the response.

#### [4.7](#) Auto-submitted

An Auto-Submitted field with a value of "auto-replied" SHOULD be included in the message header of any vacation message sent.

#### **4.7. Message Body**

The body of the message is taken from the reason string in the vacation command.

#### **5. Relationship to Recommendations for Automatic Responses to Electronic Mail**

The vacation extension implements a "Personal Responder" in the terminology defined in [[AUTO](#)]. Care has been taken in this

specification to comply with the recommendations [[AUTO](#)] makes in regards to how personal responders should behave.

## 6. Security Considerations

It is critical that implementations correctly implement the limitations described above. Replies MUST NOT be sent out in response to messages not sent directly to the user, and replies MUST NOT be sent out more often than the :days argument states.

Security issues associated with mail auto-responders are fully discussed in the security consideration section of [[AUTO](#)].

## 7. IANA Considerations

The following template specifies the IANA registration of the vacation Sieve extension specified in this document:

To: [iana@iana.org](mailto:iana@iana.org)  
Subject: Registration of new Sieve extension

Capability name: vacation  
Capability keyword: vacation  
Capability arguments: N/A  
Standards Track/IESG-approved experimental RFC number: this RFC  
Person and email address to contact for further information:  
    Tim Showalter  
    E-Mail: [tjs@psaux.com](mailto:tjs@psaux.com)

This information should be added to the list of sieve extensions given on <http://www.iana.org/assignments/sieve-extensions>.

## 8. Acknowledgements

This extension is obviously inspired by Eric Allman's vacation program under Unix. The author owes a great deal to Carnegie Mellon University, Cyrus Daboo, Ned Freed, Lawrence Greenfield, and many others whose names have been lost during the inexcusably long gestation period of this document.

## **9. Author's Address**

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## [Appendix A](#). References

### [Appendix A.1](#). Normative References"

[AUTO] Moore, K., "Recommendations for Automatic Responses to Electronic Mail", Internet-Draft, [draft-moore-auto-email-response-05.txt](#).

[KEYWORDS] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [RFC 2119](#), Harvard University, March 1997.

[MIME] Freed, N., and N. Borenstein, "Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) Part One: Format of Internet Message Bodies", [RFC 2045](#), Innosoft and First Virtual, November 1996.

[SIEVE] Showalter, T., "Sieve: A Mail Filtering Language", Mirapoint, Inc., [RFC 3028](#), January, 2001.

### [Appendix A.2](#). Informative References

[MAILBOXNAMES] Crocker, D. "Mailbox Names for Common Services, Roles, and Functions", [RFC 2142](#), Internet Mail Consortium, May, 1997.

## [Appendix B](#). Intellectual Property Rights Statement

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(See [RFC 3667](#) sections [5.4](#) and [5.5](#).)

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