

Tons of Exim documentation are available on-line, as are a couple of books by the author of the software.

Googling for Exim questions often seems to lead to old, undated, and sometimes inappropriate materials, so check the official documentation first. A 400+ page specification and configuration document (**doc/spec.txt**) is included in the distribution. This document is also available from exim.org as a PDF file. It's the definitive reference work for Exim and is updated religiously with each new release.

There are two cultures with respect to Exim configuration: Debian's and the rest of the world's. Debian runs its own set of mailing lists to support users; we do not cover the Debian-specific configuration extensions here.

Exim releases 4.70 and later have dropped support for DomainKeys (the precursor to DKIM) and now include internal DKIM support by default. Both systems can and do coexist in the real world, but DKIM is on the IETF standards track and will eventually replace DomainKeys.

Exim is like **sendmail** in that it is implemented as a single process that performs all the mail chores. However, it does not carry all of **sendmail**'s historical baggage (support for ancient address formats, needing to get mail to hosts not on the Internet, etc.). When compiled with content scanning, it interfaces with common spam and virus scanners such as SpamAssassin and ClamAV. Policy control is implemented through ACLs (access control lists) that can accept or reject messages or pass them to external scanning software. Per-user filters are available through a special type of entry in users' **.forward** files. Many aspects of Exim's behavior are specified at compile time, the chief examples being Exim's database and message store formats.

The workhorses in the Exim system are called routers and transports. Both are included in the general category of "drivers." Routers decide how messages should be delivered, and transports decide on the mechanics of making deliveries. Routers are an ordered list of things to try, whereas transports are an unordered set of delivery methods.

Exim installation

You can download the latest distribution from exim.org, or if yours is a Linux site, from your favorite package repository. Refer to the top-level **README** file and the file **src/EDITME**, where you must set installation locations, user IDs, and other parameters. **EDITME** is over 1,000 lines long, but it's mostly comments that lead you through the compilation process; required changes are well labeled. After your edits, save the file as **../Local/Makefile** or **../Local/Makefile-osname** (if you are building configurations for several different operating systems from the same distribution directory) before you run **make**.

Here are a few of the important variables (our opinion) and suggested values (Exim developers' opinion) from the **EDITME** file. The first five are required, and the rest are recommended.