

How to spot a hoax email

You may already be well aware of this information, but on the other hand it may act as a useful reminder.

You will undoubtedly at some point receive an email warning about the 'latest virus', or a call to support some 'just cause' by forwarding an email, or even an emergency request to send money to someone. You may be offered the chance to become rich by helping someone move money from country to country.

Sometimes hoax emails can appear to come from people you know. This can happen if they have had their email hacked, or they may have fallen for a hoax themselves.

Hoax emails are designed to rip you off or waste your time, and you should just delete them. Some hoax emails may contain viruses. Even if they are not technically dangerous to your PC, they can slow down your service by swamping the network.

Never act on any email you think is suspicious; and don't forward chain emails – they waste everyone's time.

Some ways to spot a hoax email:

It asks you for money	It may seem obvious that you shouldn't send money anywhere in response to an email. However, people still fall for this and it continues to be worthwhile for the hoaxers to send out requests.
It asks you for personal details	If the email appears to be from your bank for example, it may ask you for your user name and password. A real bank would not ask you to provide personal information by email.
It is badly written	Lots of CAPITALISATION, ((IMPORTANT!!! or THIS IS NOT A JOKE!!!). Flagrant overuse of punctuation, and general bad grammar and spelling, is a giveaway.
It asks you to tell all your friends, or forward to everyone in your email contact list	It does this because someone wants to waste everyone else's time and you should not help it to do this. It is in no way trying to be a helpful public service.
It claims to be 'not a hoax'	A hoax will typically contain details that try to convince you. There may be references to reputable companies such as Microsoft. Reputable companies would not send out such chain emails. Don't be fooled
It stresses a sense of urgency or predicts dire consequences	Hoax emails may appear to be from a friend asking for your help in an emergency. They may play on your sympathy, purport to be helping look for missing children, reporting animal cruelty, or asking for prayers for someone suffering a terminal illness.
It has a history of circulation	Look for lots of >>> marks on the left hand side. This indicates an email has been forwarded many times. Hoax emails can keep going for as long as someone continues to forward them on.