

Protect your email addresses on your websites from Spam

How to protect your email addresses!

Prevention is better than Cure.

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If you have a website, it is more than likely that you will have your email address displayed on it. Most HTML generating programs will create your email addresses in a form that are easily read by Email Harvesting Programs.

This report will show you how to take measures to protect your email addresses from being harvested by the spammers.

I've written this report for a number of reasons.

1. The amount of **SPAM** emails I now receive is driving me nuts.
2. There are ways to prevent **SPAM** from the outset and
3. If you don't know about these methods, you need to know!

Email Harvesting is performed by special scripts that search all over the internet for email addresses.

Email addresses can be found at a number of locations.

1. Websites.

Websites are a play ground for finding email addresses.

If you have a website, it's more than likely that you have your email address listed on there somewhere, so visitors to your website can email you.

Unfortunately, it is very easy to extract email addresses from websites if you don't take precautions.

2. Forums.

In your profile, you can enter your email address and have it displayed.

Choose the "Do Not Display Email Address" and communicate through the PM (Personal Message) system. Then you can give the other person your actual email address if you wish.

If you do put your email address in your Forum signature. It's there for the picking.

3. Search Engines.

Your website is hopefully on a search engine. It "may" display your email address in its search results.

But there is Hope!

There are various means available to us to make it more difficult for these scripts to find our email address. These scripts are pretty dumb (at the time of writing). They know what they are looking for and because of their nature, they don't want to be spending too much time "figuring out" what may appear to be an email address. There are more than enough out there for them. If they see a sudden lack of email addresses, due to us being more clever than they are, then they "may" try to catch up. By that time, lets hope they no longer see it being "worth their while".

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So what to do!

Well lets take a look at a sample email address.

Lets say you have an email address like myname@mydomain.com.
That's the standard form, and its what these SPAMBots are looking for.

So we can make it more difficult for them.

One thing you may have seen on forums and websites is something like the following.

myname AT mydomain DOT com

To a human, you and I, we can figure it out easily. This format has to be manually typed into any email program where we replace the **AT** with the **@** and the **DOT** with the **.** and remove the spaces.

On many websites an email address will be coded in HTML as
myname@mydomain.com

This will appear on the website as a link in the form of myname@mydomain.com.

Someone can click on it and in most cases, their email program will bring up a blank email with the address in it, waiting for them to write a message to you and send it.

This same format is exactly what the SPAMBots are looking for and it's the default form used by all website building programs. So there are many email addresses sitting on websites saying "Harvest Me!".

So lets take a look at what we can do here.

We could use the format we saw above but that requires your website visitor to manually convert it and type it in. Sometimes that's too difficult for some.

One of the simplest things we can do is replace the **@** symbol with its ascii equivalent that web browsers will understand but the Harvesting scripts won't.

So we would replace the **@** with the characters **@**.

That is - Ampersand(**&**), Hash or Number(**#**) the number **64** and a Semi Colon(**;**).
And we need to do it in both locations.

So our email address in our HTML would go from being

```
<a href="mailto:myname@mydomain.com">myname@mydomain.com</a>  
to  
<a href="mailto:myname&#64;mydomain.com">myname&#64;mydomain.com</a>
```

This will still render (appear) correctly and perform exactly as before.

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To date this has been found to be sufficient in masking email addresses. There is of course, nothing preventing you from changing the complete link into ascii.

There are many websites that provide a page where you can enter in your email and it will generate the ascii codes for you.

All you need do then is copy and paste the results into your HTML in the places where your email addresses are.

Of course you need to have access to your websites HTML source, make the changes and upload the new files, or use your online website editor if you use one of those.

If you can't do that , then get onto the person who did your website for you and get them to make the changes if they haven't done so already.

You can, of course, send them this report so they'll know what to do. It is very possible they have not heard about these techniques.

This is where you can convert your email addresses.

If you would like to encode (convert) your email addresses into ascii, I have provided a webpage where you can paste in your email address, press the Convert button and copy and paste the results back into your website code.

Upload the new files and Viola! You've just made it more difficult to fall victim to those nasty Email Harvester programs.

Go to
<http://www.grandnetbiz.com/a/protectmyemail>
and follow the instructions.

How can you tell if your email addresses are at risk on your website?

The easiest way to check your websites code is by going to any of your webpages on your website(s). Right Mouse Click on your webpage and a menu box will appear.

If you are using FireFox then click on “**View Page Source**” or if you are using Internet Explorer click on “**View Source**”.

Other web browsers will have a similar option.

Now you should be looking at the Source Code of your Webpage.

What we want to do is to find all the occurrences of the term “**mailto**”.

You can do this by either pressing your CTRL key then the F Key, also written as CTRL F,

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or on the menu there will be an EDIT – FIND or something similar which will allow you to search your pages source code.

Look for the word mailto or even the @ character and see what you can find.

If they appear as they do in the original HTML example above, then they'll need changing.

What's the fallout from all this Spamming?

For people online, emails are the main source of communication with others.

Because of spammers, emails are harder to send to their intended recipients due to the Spam Blocking people need to use to block all the Spam emails they would normally receive. Due to the nature of spam blocking software, it is very likely that innocent emails also get stopped.

It's just how it is.

I'm not going to discuss Spam blocking in any great depth in this report. That's a whole subject in itself.

Speak to your Internet Service Provider on what spam blocking services they can provide you with.

If you have a website, contact your hosting company regarding what they can do to enable spam blocking if you are using email addresses from that domain name.

Remember, prevention is better than cure.

So please, if you can, implement these changes to your websites and keep in mind that where ever your email appears out there in the public domain of the internet, there are people looking to use them for all the wrong reasons.

But we won't let them beat us, will we?

All the best and enjoy your time online.

Tim Brownlaw

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and follow the instructions.