

How to Spot a Phishing Scam

Cyber crime is a critical threat with social engineering attacks becoming more sophisticated, realistic, and difficult to recognize. Phishing attacks are one of the most common forms of cyber crime. What does a phishing email look like? Review the example below for characteristics of a phishing scam disguised to look like a legitimate email.

Generic subject line

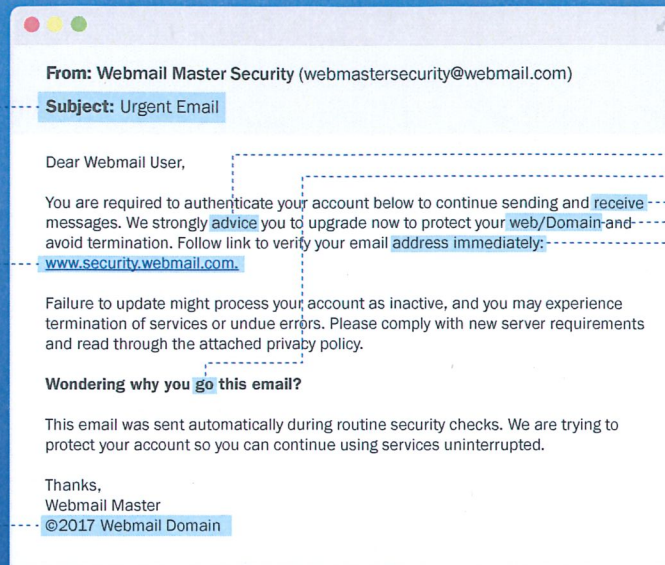
Legitimate emails usually have detailed subject lines. A vague subject line can be a key indicator of a phishing scam.

Suspicious URL

Hover over links included in emails to see the actual destination of the URL.

Improper use of copyright

Watch for improper use of copyright information. This is used to make the phishing email look official.



Bad grammar/spelling

Phishing emails often contain misspelled words and bad grammar. This is a sign that the email did not come from a professional organization or a real person you may know.

Unnecessary urgency

Use your intuition and if something 'feels' wrong, consider calling the organization or office directly to validate the email.

Types of Social Engineering



Phishing:

Online communications or emails designed to lure individuals into providing sensitive information.

Tip: When in doubt, throw it out. If an email looks suspicious, contact the organization/individual directly to validate the legitimacy of the email. You can also report the email to your email provider's IT Security department.



Ransomware:

A type of malware that prevents or limits users from accessing their system or select files, unless a ransom is paid to restore access.

Tip: Be proactive and protect against data loss by backing up your files and keeping them safe on a physical, external storage device.



Identity Theft:

An act of wrongfully obtaining and using another person's information that involves fraud or deception.

Tip: Be diligent before posting personal information online and think carefully before sharing information through apps and websites.

For more information and tips to stay safe online throughout the year, visit: <https://www.dhs.gov/ncsam>