

Email spam is one of the greatest annoyances of our time. Email addresses on a webpage are no secret to spam robots. Here's a guide that should help you protect your email addresses from these spam spiders.

How do email spammers operate?

The spammers use automated search programs (sometimes called spam spiders or spambots) to search the Internet looking for email addresses that they can send their spam to. Email addresses always contain an @ symbol. Most spambots do a pattern-search for likely combinations of letters (abc@xyz.com) like billgates@microsoft.com or larrypage@google.org in the HTML source of webpages. Often they just search for the @ character and grab all the letters on each side on the assumption that it's a valid email address.

How can I prevent a spam robot from finding my email address?

Replace the AT (@) and DOT (.) symbols:

The most common approach to block email harvesting is to remove the @ symbol. If you eliminate the @ from email addresses then most spambots won't be able to recognize that the text is actually an email address: Here are some examples:

andersonaj AT staffordschools DOT net
andersonaj (at) staffordschools.net
andersonaj_AT_staffordschools_DOT_net

Mask your email with tags, append meaningful words:

Consider "masking" your email address. Masking involves putting a word or phrase in your email address so that it will trick a harvesting computer program, but not a person. Some email masking examples commonly employed by newsgroups and mailing list subscribers:

andersonaj@staffordschools.net.nospam
andersonaj@staffordschools.net.removeme
andersonaj@REMOVE.staffordschools.net

If creating a list of email address with the same domain name (staffordschools.net), give instructions on the web page to construct the email address:

For email addresses, add "@staffordschools.net" to the address shown after the staff member's name.

John Anderson – andersonaj
Elizabeth Collins - collinsek
Jane Smith – smithjc

If you have any questions, please contact the Groupwise team.

Julie Cossette – Groupwise Engineer – cossetteja AT staffordschools DOT net
Jill Gossard – Groupwise Manager – gossardjm AT staffordschools DOT net