

This Month's FAQ - How Can I Tell A Legitimate Email From A Hoax?

Question: I have friends that frequently send me important-sounding emails that I'm supposed to forward to people I know. How can I tell if the messages are legitimate or a hoax?

Answer: Good question. It's pretty simple. There are five signs that an email is a hoax:

1. **Urgency**
You'll see lots of exclamation points and words in all caps like URGENT!!! and WARNING!!!
2. **"Tell all your friends"**
There will always be a request that you share this "important information" by forwarding the message to everybody in your email address book or to as many people as you possibly can.
3. **"This isn't a hoax"**
The message may include a seemingly sincere premise like "My neighbor, who works for Microsoft, just received this warning so I know it's true. He asked me to pass it along."
4. **Dire consequences**
The text will predict dire consequences if you don't act immediately—a missing child won't be found, or someone won't be able to die happy.
5. **History**
Look for lots of >>>> marks in the left margin. These indicate that people who fell for the hoax have forwarded the message countless times before it reached you.



When in doubt, do your homework on a particular email at www.hoax-slayer.com, www.snopes.com, or www.scambusters.org. It's worth a few minutes of your time to avoid spreading misinformation to others.