

10 Common Traits of Phishing Emails



Phishing is one of the most common attack methods used by cybercriminals and the one we're all probably most familiar with. Fortunately, there are signs that can help you identify whether or not that email in your inbox is a scam.

Asking for Personal Information

Most reputable organizations will never email you asking for your address, phone number, national ID number, or other personal data.

Inconsistencies in Links

Always hover over links with your mouse pointer to display the full URL. If it leads somewhere that doesn't logically belong within the context of the email, or generally looks nonsensical, don't click!

Unrealistic Threats

Phishing emails often feature threatening language, such as "Payment overdue!" or "Your account has been compromised!", in order to generate a response from their targets.

Generic Greetings

Unlike legitimate entities that will address you by your full name or username, phishing emails usually opt for generic greetings, such as Dear Customer or Dear Sir/Madam.

A Sense of Urgency

Similar to unrealistic threats, emails that urge you to click on a link or download an attachment or update your account immediately are likely scams.

You're Asked to Send Money

Whether it be overdue taxes or an upfront payment to cover expenses, any email that asks for money should immediately raise your suspicions.

Too Good to Be True

The old saying remains true to this day: if it's too good to be true, it's likely untrue. Keep that in mind any time you get an email claiming you won the lottery or are due a large family inheritance.

Poor Spelling & Grammar

Most generic phishing attempts contain spelling and grammar errors or feature awkward wording/phrasing.

Suspicious Attachments

Attachments aren't always malicious, but use extreme caution whenever you receive them unexpectedly.

From a Government Agency

In almost every case, government agencies don't use email to communicate anything of consequence. The IRS, for example, will never email you about your taxes or payments.