



## Choosing an E-mail Client

### Choosing an E-mail Program

There are many different email programs and services, ranging in price from free to several hundred dollars. Some are web-based (meaning it is accessed with your browser), while others are programs that are installed separately on your computer.

There are many factors to consider when choosing your e-mail platform, including security features, multi-profile capability, search capabilities, filtering options, spellchecker, and sort options among others.

### Potential Risks

- Email-borne viruses  
Viruses and other types of malicious code are often spread as attachments to email messages. Before opening any attachments, be sure you know the source of the attachment. It is not enough that the mail originated from an address you recognize. The Melissa virus spread precisely because it originated from a familiar address. Also, malicious code might be distributed in amusing or enticing programs. Never run a program unless you know it was written by a person or company that you trust. Also, don't send programs of unknown origin to your friends or coworkers simply because they are amusing—they might contain a Trojan horse program. [Read more](#)
- Spam  
Spam can loosely be defined as bulk unwanted emails. Most spam originates from a list of emails purchased by a company or website looking for customers. The lists are purchased and sold by numerous companies who have an online presence and who actively collect their customers' emails. Unfortunately, spam cannot always be completely avoided, but there are [steps](#) that you can take to reduce it.
- Spoofing
- Third-party interception  
Email, in general, is very insecure. There is software readily available that can give someone the ability to access, intercept, and even edit email either going to or coming from your accounts and/or computer. There are ways to protect email that you send. Encryption and ID-certification are two common methods. See the links below for more information.

### Additional Resources

CERT: [Understanding Your Computer: Email Clients](#)

MIT: [Feature Comparison Chart for E-mail Programs](#)

CERT: [Benefits and Risks of Free Email Services](#)

CERT: [Understanding Digital Signatures](#)