



INFOSHEET —

# What is the difference between phishing & spam?

Both land in your inbox on a regular basis. But what is the basic difference between spam and phishing? Find out why you should be careful even with supposedly harmless emails, and how you can protect yourself from phishing and spam.

# Phishing vs. Spam

## - which is which?

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### Spam

#### Meaning

Spam is also known as “junk mail”. This refers to unsolicited commercial emails that are sent out en masse.

#### Facts & figures

Between 60 and 90 percent of all emails sent currently are junk mail.

#### Intentions / target

In principle, spam has commercial intentions – it wants to advertise a product or service. But watch out: Many supposedly harmless spam emails turn out to be wolves in sheep’s clothing, and are phishing emails with dangerous links or attachments.

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### Phishing

In this online scam, cybercriminals try to “fish” for sensitive information.

On average, more than one in three people fall for phishing emails.

Phishing emails are designed to disclose bank details, passwords, login data, or similarly sensitive data. They always pursue malicious intentions and are intended to harm the victims financially or personally.



**Spam fun fact:** The acronym “SPAM” originally stood for “spiced pork and ham”. In a Monty Python sketch, a restaurant served spam by the dozen – so many times that no one wanted to hear the word spam anymore. Online, the term has been reinterpreted and is now used as an acronym for “send phenomenal amounts of mail.”

# Checklist

## How do I recognize dangerous emails?

Dangerous emails are increasingly difficult to spot, but some basic characteristics will help to detect them. Be especially careful if ...

- ✓ emails come from incomplete email addresses,
- ✓ there is an accumulation of misspelled words,
- ✓ you are asked to do something (e.g., change your password within the next hour),
- ✓ the URL in the email text seems strange to you,
- ✓ you do not know the sender,
- ✓ you are asked to open links or attachments.

Have you detected a potential phishing email? Then go and hit the Phishing Report Button ASAP before you delete it.



[Learn more about Phishing on our blog](#)



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