

## How to Spot an Email Hoax

Taken from an article by David Emery. Visit the web for the full article:  
<http://urbanlegends.about.com/cs/nethoaxes/ht/emailhoax.htm>

Without researching the factual claims made in a forwarded email there's no 100 percent sure way to tell if it's a hoax, but here you'll find a list of common signs to watch for...

### Here's How:

1. Note whether the text you've received was actually written by the person who sent it. Did anyone sign their name to it? If not, be skeptical.
2. Look for the telltale phrase, 'Forward this to everyone you know!' The more urgent the plea, the more suspect the message.
3. Look for statements like 'This is NOT a hoax' or 'This is NOT an urban legend.' They typically mean the opposite of what they say.
4. Watch for overly emphatic language, as well as frequent use of UPPERCASE LETTERS and multiple exclamation points!!!!!!
5. If the text seems aimed more at persuading than informing the reader, be suspicious. Like propagandists, hoaxers are more interested in pushing people's emotional buttons than communicating accurate information.
6. If the message purports to impart extremely important information that you've never heard of before or read elsewhere in legitimate venues, be very suspicious.
7. Read carefully and think critically about what the message says, looking for logical inconsistencies, violations of common sense and blatantly false claims.
8. Look for subtle or not-so-subtle jokes — indications that the author is pulling your leg.
9. Check for references to outside sources of information. Hoaxes don't typically cite verifiable evidence, nor link to websites with corroborating information.
10. Check to see if the message has been debunked by websites that debunk urban legends and Internet hoaxes (see below).
11. Research any factual claims in the text to see if there is published evidence to support them. If you find none, odds are you've been the recipient of an email hoax.

### Tips:

Virtually any email chain letter you receive (i.e., any message forwarded multiple times before it got to you) is more likely to be false than true. You should automatically be skeptical of chain letters.

Hoaxers usually try every means available to make their lies believable -- e.g., mimicking a journalistic style, attributing the text to a 'legitimate' source, or implying that powerful corporate or government interests have tried to keep the information from you.

Be especially wary of health-related rumors. Most importantly, never act on 'medical information' forwarded from unknown sources without first verifying its accuracy with a doctor or other reliable source.

Additional resources for hoax and urban legend email messages: **[snopes.com](http://snopes.com)**, **[hoaxbusters.ciac.org](http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org)**, **[truthorfiction.com](http://truthorfiction.com)** and **[hoax-slayer.com](http://hoax-slayer.com)**.

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