Email Safety

Bypassing Automatic Hyperlink Rendering

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EMAIL SAFETY

The document provided will instruct Mac and Windows users how to properly send emails that include URL’s, using Entourage, MAC Mail and Outlook 2007 email clients.

The current problems with Entourage, MAC Mail and Outlook 2007, are that whenever a user types in a URL in the body of the message, all three email clients convert the URL to clickable hyperlinks. Active hyperlinks pose a security issue because even though the link looks legitimate to a user, the link can actually redirect the user to a malicious webpage if he/she is not cautious. For example, this link, while saying that it will take you to UC, actually will take you to Google. Try it:  http://www.uc.edu

People with ill intent will often make use of this trick to get to you go to websites that try to steal your passwords or install key loggers or other malicious software on your computer. You have to ask yourself, if they sent me a link claiming to be one thing, but actually sending me somewhere else, why are they lying to me? Can’t be for any good reason...

The steps below will allow you to include a link in emails going to Entourage, MAC Mail and Outlook email clients and not have those links turned into live hyperlinks.

To set your own client up to not allow live hyperlinks to be sent to you:

The one drawback of this is that any email sent to you that has cool embedded graphic, etc. will just show to you as plain text. The upside is people won’t be able to use this trick on you.

Entourage Remediation

1. Open Entourage
2. Click the **Entourage** drop down window, located at the very top of your screen
3. Click **Preferences**
4. Click **Compose**
5. Under general settings, make sure **Mail Format & News Format** are selected as **Plain Text**.
6. **Close Entourage**, and **Restart** for effects to take place.

Outlook 2007 Remediation

1. Open Outlook 2007
2. Click on the **Tools** drop down window
3. Click on **Trust Center**
4. Click on **Email Security**
5. Under the **Read as Plain Text** category, make sure both “**Read all standard mail in plain text**” and “**Read all digitally signed mail in plain text**” is selected.
6. **Close Outlook**, and **Restart** for effects to take place.
Mac Mail

Note: There are no options in MAC Mail to be able to read/send emails as plain text.

To send an email that will not have the links show up as live:

DO NOT INCLUDE either of the following before the URL

http://www.
OR
www.

DO INCLUDE Curly Braces {} around the URL

Example: Here is the URL for our site. The URL is set up to prevent the automatic rendering of clickable hyperlinks in these email clients:

EX 1: {uc.edu}
EX 2: {uc.edu/infosec}
EX 3: {uc.edu/infosec/}

If a person copies the link between the {} and pastes it into their browser, it will still take them to our website with no problem.

NOTE: that this method does not necessarily work with all web clients. Notably, some of the popular web-based email solutions will still render the link as clickable even if you do this. Even so, it is nice to take steps to help protect yourself and others.