

# USE THE “BCC” ...

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Hopefully, you have already read my rant about “EMAIL HOAXES.” In that message, I attempted to discourage you from being hasty with the “forward” button in your e-mail program. With e-mail, it is almost as easy (much too easy) to send a message to 100 people versus just one person. Sometimes, we are all tempted to send something out to all of our friends, but it is very important that we use discretion when doing so.

But suppose you have a legitimate reason to mass forward to several people, or suppose you just want to send out an original message to several people in one of your “mailing lists.” In those situations, I highly recommend the following practices.

## IF YOU ARE FORWARDING SOMEONE ELSE’S MESSAGE:

Some messages may contain harmful attachments, images, or links. One way to reduce the potential for harm is by selective "cut-&-paste" from the RECEIVED message into a NEW message. Or, if it is relatively short, just compose a new message from scratch....and delete the RECEIVED message. This method also allows you to skip over many of the e-mail addresses that are probably listed when a message is forwarded multiple times! **When possible, you should avoid revealing e-mail addresses of others to total strangers.** This is regarded as part of good “e-mail etiquette.”

### *On that last note...*

When sending or forwarding anything en masse to persons who probably don’t know each other, it is usually best to use the "BCC:" section and put ALL addresses there. *“BCC” stands for “blind carbon copy,” and it prevents recipients from seeing any e-mail address except their own.* This is not usually necessary if all the recipients are family, friends, co-workers, etc. That is, it’s not usually necessary if all the recipients already know each other. But if they **don’t** necessarily know each other, there are potential problems if you simply put all the names in the “TO:” or “CC:” section of the header. What kind of problems, you ask?

Have you ever received a humorous message, forwarded by a friend? Most of us have. Or perhaps you are on someone’s mailing list – for example, I occasionally get messages from one of my children’s school teachers, a message they sent to all the parents.

If you look closely at those messages, the chances are good that you will see the e-mail addresses of a dozen people that you don’t even know. If it’s been forwarded multiple times, you might see hundreds of names! So...what’s the harm in that?

**a)** Many e-mail programs are set to 'auto-add' any received address to the address book. If yours is setup that way and you receive forwards, all the addresses may go into your address book. As you can imagine, this can lead to problems after time.

**b)** Some forwarded e-mails (albeit, not many) can contain viruses. The message is crafted in such a way as to convince people of the urgency or importance, so many people say, "Better safe than sorry." But I try to shy away from that, at least when it comes to Internet e-mail, since I know that 95% of the messages are hoaxes. What may seem like the "safe" thing (forwarding) may really be the wrong thing (if a virus is attached).

Even if there is NOT a virus attached, you run the risk of infection....because your e-mail address is now a part of many other people's address book – including total strangers! If they get a virus, the chances are good that it's going to automatically send the virus to you!

**c) SPAM** -- my biggest concern with forwarded e-mails is that they quickly accumulate hundreds of addresses. It is a known fact that spammers often use such techniques to "harvest" e-mail addresses. They collect as many valid ones as they can find, and these forwarded messages are a viable source. If you enjoy spam (junk) messages, then keep revealing your address to everyone you know...and don't know...and encourage others to do the same... :)

So again, one way to reduce these possibilities is to put all addresses in the "BCC:" section. There are certainly times when forwarding en masse is needful, and in those times, we should use the BCC. Everyone will still get the message, but they won't see any other e-mail addresses other than their own.

*If you're guilty of this, take heart – it's a mistake that many good people have made. I was guilty of it myself in the past, until someone kindly pointed this out to me. It really doesn't take any more effort to use the "BCC:" – it just takes a second to remember to do it!*