

Phishing Red Flags Cheat Sheet

Cheat Sheet · Spot The Scam In Under 60 Seconds.

Phishing is still the #1 cause of account takeovers. Train your eye — once you see these patterns you can't unsee them.

12 Phishing Red Flags

- 1 Urgency.** 'Act within 24 hours,' 'final notice,' 'account will be suspended.'
- 2 Mismatched sender.** Display name says 'Apple,' but the email is at *apple-billing-support.help*.
- 3 Generic greeting.** 'Dear customer' instead of your name — for any service that knows your name.
- 4 Hovering shows a different URL.** Mouse over the link (or long-press on mobile) and the destination doesn't match.
- 5 Slightly wrong domain.** *amazon.com*, *paypa1.com*, *microsoft-secure.com*.
- 6 Unexpected attachment.** Especially .zip, .iso, .htm, or 'invoice.pdf.exe'.
- 7 Asks for credentials.** No real company emails you a login form.
- 8 'Verify your account' link.** Even if the email is genuine-looking, type the URL yourself.
- 9 Threats.** Lawsuit, arrest, IRS, deportation, account closure.
- 10 Too good to be true.** Refund, lottery, inheritance, package you didn't order.
- 11 Tone mismatch.** Coworker / friend writing in a way that doesn't sound like them.
- 12 Spelling and grammar errors.** Especially in supposedly corporate communications.

Verify-Before-You-Click — 4-Step Flow

- 1 Stop.** Don't click. Don't reply. Take 30 seconds.
- 2 Inspect.** Check sender domain, link destination, attachments, tone.
- 3 Verify out-of-band.** Open the app or website directly. Call the company at the number on the back of your card — never the number in the email.
- 4 Report.** Gmail: Report Phishing. Outlook: Report → Phishing. Forward to *reportphishing@apwg.org* and (if it impersonates a company) to that company's abuse address.

If You Already Clicked

- Disconnect Wi-Fi if you downloaded anything.
- Change the password of any account you submitted credentials for, immediately, from another device. Enable MFA.
- Run a malware scan.
- Notify your bank if any financial info was shared. Consider a credit freeze.

- Report at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

TEST YOURSELF

Can You Spot The Phishing Email? Take The 60-Second Test.

Ten real emails. Some legitimate, some scams. Your score tells you exactly where your inbox-defense weak spots are.

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