

Does HTML Encoding a mailto tag stop spammers

Asked 15 years, 10 months ago Modified 12 years, 9 months ago Viewed 4k times



2



I think its fairly common practice these days not to include a mailto: tag in your webpage. I also realize that a better solution is to have a contact us form.

Recently I've seen some mailto tags that include and HTML encoded email address. Is this an effective way to stop spammers from attacking an email address?

Example:

```
<a href="mailto:newbi...">email me</a>
```

Also, are there any other techniques that I've left out? Which is the best method?

html

email-spam

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edited Mar 16, 2012 at 20:38



Peter O.

32.8k ● 14 ● 84 ● 97

asked Feb 19, 2009 at 1:22



bendewey

40.2k ● 13 ● 103 ● 125

Look at stackoverflow.com/questions/483212/... maybe you'll find something helpful!

– abatishchev Feb 19, 2009 at 1:41

7 Answers

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3



From what I've heard, it will help reduce the influx of spam but will not stop it entirely. A minority (for now) of email-address-harvesting bots are smart enough to apply the decoding.

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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:25



David Z

131k ● 29 ● 261 ● 281

Added a second part to my question. What's ideal? any thoughts? – [bendewey](#) Feb 19, 2009 at 1:32



1

Another technique is to use some Javascript to dynamically generate the mailto tag at page load time. In order for spammers to scrape such addresses, they would need to have a full Javascript processor in their web spider.



Some spammers may already do this.



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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:37



[Greg Hewgill](#)

990k ● 191 ● 1.2k ● 1.3k

But in order for users to contact your business, they must have javascript enabled - not everyone does! – [Flash](#) Aug 8, 2012 at 7:41



1

For my personal home page, I give the email address in a graphic. Then I apologize for not making it a link.



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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:37



[Mark Ransom](#)

308k ● 44 ● 416 ● 647



1

I typically use the [Hivelogic Encoder](#). It is helpful for encoding an entire link element, not just the mailto.



One lesson learned the annoying way, however, is to comment your code with what the original element looked like *before* encoding. I've accidentally left off classes on the `<a>` tag a few times.



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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:39



[Mark Hurd](#)

13.1k ● 2 ● 28 ● 28



1

Without making it hard for some of your users, you're only ever going to be able to stop lazy spammers — because you don't know ahead of time which you're looking



at. So if you deliver something easily accessible to a legitimate user, you're delivering something easily accessible to a spammer.



My best advice is just to get a very good spam filter if you're going to put your address on the Web. No amount of href obfuscation will do as much good.

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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:58



[Chuck](#)

237k ● 30 ● 304 ● 392



1

Personally I'd encourage using a form as that will give you much greater control over how you tackle any potential spam. (Personally I don't like "front end" solutions such as CAPTCHA as they're rarely user friendly - if it causes any inconvenience/additional work for your user, I generally like to see if there's a better way)



Using a form also has the additional benefit of enabling you to obtain data from the contactee with some kind of structure. (I.e. it reduces the risk of someone contacting you with a question, but not providing enough info (even their name perhaps) which might help you in providing them with the best response possible.

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edited Mar 16, 2012 at 20:37



[Peter O.](#)

32.8k ● 14 ● 84 ● 97

answered Mar 18, 2011 at 11:49



[Kieran](#)

11 ● 1



0

I have been using simple Javascript string concatenation and substring operations to obfuscate the email address for years on several websites. This seems to have worked well, since I got minimal spam on these addresses. This cannot mean that it will still work in the future.



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answered Feb 19, 2009 at 1:46



[cdonner](#)

37.6k ● 22 ● 110 ● 155