



# Email Networks and Security

Cybersecurity  
Networking 2, Day 2



# Class Objectives

---

By the end of today's class, you will be able to:



Validate DNS records using `nslookup`.



Describe the processes, protocols, and headers associated with email communication.



Analyze email headers to identify suspicious content.

# DNS Record Types

Remember:



**Domain Name Systems (DNS)** is like the phonebook of the internet.

It's why we can enter [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) instead of 64.233.177.139.



Domain-to-IP-address  
is just one type of  
DNS translation.

# DNS Record Types

---

DNS provides many details about a domain.

## For example:

- When you send an email to **IT@acmecorp.com**, your server must find the mail server name (**mailhost.acmecorp.com**) for the domain receiving the email.
- The server checks that the mail record for **acmecorp.com** is **mailhost.acmecorp.com**.



# DNS Zone File

---

All the records for a particular domain are stored in a file called the DNS zone file.

01

A DNS zone file lives in a DNS server.

02

DNS zone files contain a Time to Live (TTL), indicating how long a DNS cache will remember information in the file before having to request an updated copy.

03

DNS zone files also contain the DNS records with information about the domain.

# DNS Record Types

---

Some common DNS record types include:



**A Record:** Translates a domain to an IP address. (widgets.com → 23.43.54.234)



**PTR Record:** Translates an IP address to a domain. (23.43.54.234 → widgets.com)



**CNAME (canonical name) Record:** An alias record used to point one domain to another domain. (widgets2.com → widgets.com)



**SOA (state of authority) Record:** Contains administrative details about a domain, such as the email of the administrator, TTL value, and time of last update.



**NS (name server) Record:** Indicates which server contains actual DNS records for a domain.





There are also DNS record types  
that assist with email communication.

# MX (Mail Exchange) Record

MX records directs emails to a specific mail server for a domain.



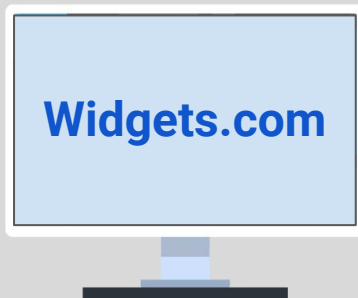
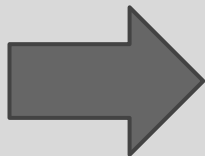
widgets.com has a mail server called **mailhost.widgets.com**.



If an email is sent to bob@widgets.com, the sender validates that the MX record for widgets.com is **mailhost.widgets.com**.



The sender directs the email to the mail server **mailhost.widget.com**.



Mail server: **mailhost.widgets.com**



# MX Record

**Just like NS Records, domains can have multiple MX records in case one goes down or can't handle all the traffic.**

- Preference numbers set the primary and secondary mail servers.
- For example: gadgets.com has the following MX records:
  - 10 mailhost\_Atlanta.gadgets.com
  - 5 mailhost\_NewYork.gadgets.com
  - 20 mailhost\_LA.gadgets.com

Emails sent to gadgets.com are first received by New York (5). If NY is down, Atlanta (10) will be tried next. If Atlanta is down, LA (20).

# TXT (Text) Record

**TXT Records are used to include notes related to the DNS.**

- Some notes are human-readable, such as the associated company name.
- Other notes are read by the computer, such as the SPF (Sender Policy Framework), which determines if an email is from a trusted server.

# SPF Record

**Organizations might send emails from mail servers outside their domain.**

- Mail servers may exist in another domain, and outside companies often send marketing emails on behalf of an organization.
- An SPF record indicates mail servers that can send emails on behalf of a domain to prevent spam, phishing, and email spoofing, by detecting emails that may have a forged sender email.

Example of an SPF record: `v=spf1 ip4:192.41.100.193`

- `v=` is the version of SPF used.
- `ip4:` indicates a IPv4 host is allowed to send emails.
- `192.41.100.193` is the IP allowed to send emails on behalf of the domain.

# How SPF Works

widgets.com's DNS SPF record indicates that 23.43.54.235 and 23.43.54.236 are the IP addresses of mail servers allowed to send emails on its behalf.

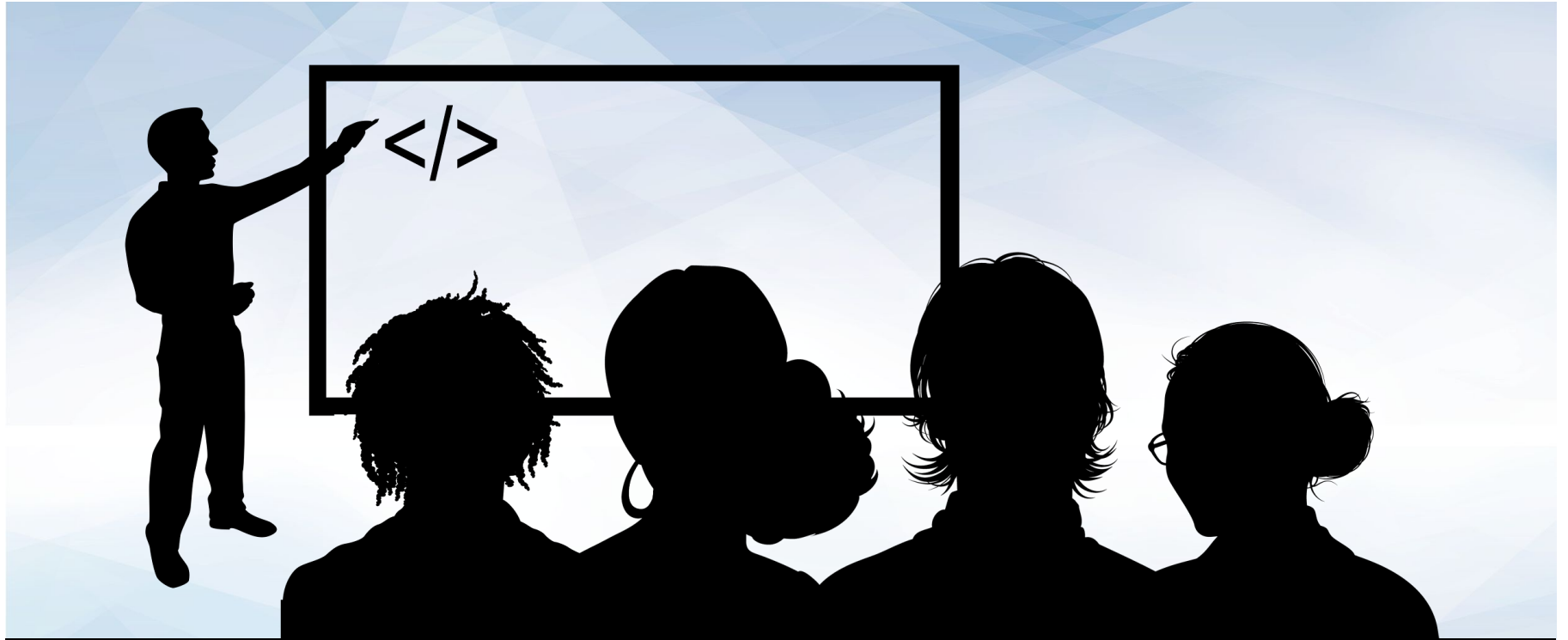
- gadgets.com receives a suspicious email from a widgets.com email.
- When the receiving email server at gadgets.com receives the email, it:
  - a. Checks the sending mail server's IP address, which is 12.54.54.23.
  - b. Validates the DNS record of widget.com's SPF record to confirm the sending mail server's IP address is either 23.43.54.235 or 23.43.54.236.

**The sender's IP is 12.54.54.23, not 23.43.54.235 or 23.43.54.236. gadgets.com's mail server can identify the email as spam and reject or send it to the spam folder.**

# nslookup

If emails are not reaching their final destination, we need to check that the MX DNS record for that particular domain is accurate.

- **nslookup** (name server lookup) is a command-line tool that allows us to easily check the DNS records of any domain.



# Instructor Demonstration

nslookup





## **Activity:** DNS Record Types

In this activity, you will continue to play the role of a security analyst for Acme Corp.

Acme Corp recently updated several domain DNS records. Your task is to use **nslookup** to validate the updates of the DNS records for each of the domains provided.

**Suggested Time:**  
10 minutes





**Time's Up!** Let's Review.

# Introduction to Email Networking



An understanding of the processes and technologies involved in sending emails is key for security professionals, who have to manage email issues or attacks.

# How Emails Are Sent

# How Emails Work

**Step 1:** Bob uses Microsoft Outlook to type and send an email to Alice.



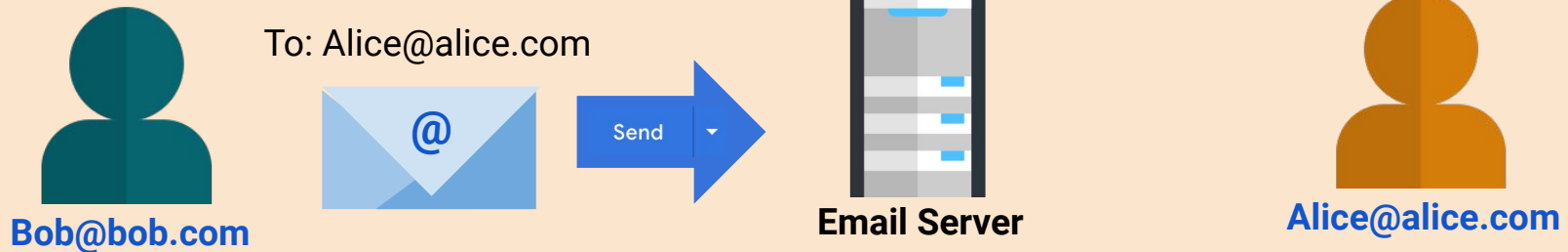
Bob, **bob@bob.com**, composes an email to Alice, at **alice@alice.com**.



Once Bob clicks **Send**, the email is forwarded to Bob's company's email server.



The email server is also referred to as the MTA (mail transfer agent).



# How Emails Work

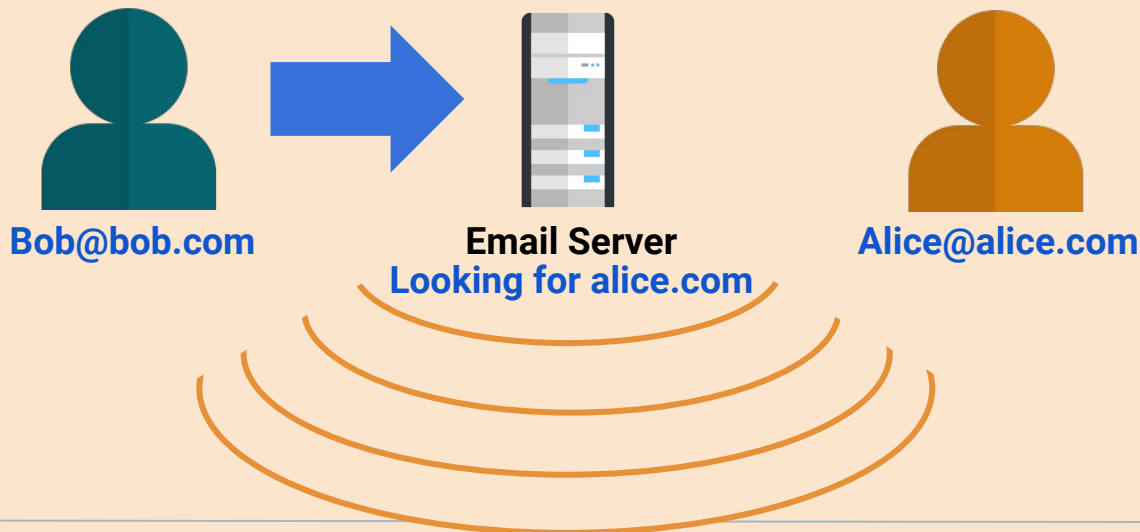
## Step 2: Bob's mail server finds Alice's mail server.



Bob's mail server does a DNS lookup against **alice.com** to determine its mail server.



Bob's mail server gets this information from **alice.com**'s MX record.



# How Emails Work

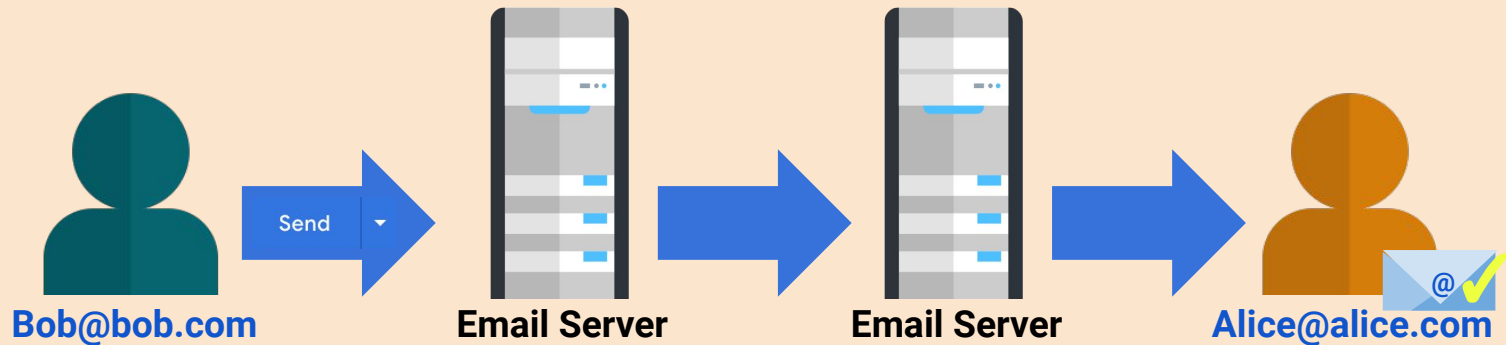
Step 3: Bob's mail server forwards the email to Alice's mail server.



Using SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer), Bob's mail server sends the email to Alice's mail server.



SMTP uses port 25 and is part of Layer 7: Application of the OSI model.





# How Emails Work

---

Two layer 7 protocols can be used to transfer the email to Alice's local computer.  
**Step 4: Alice downloads Bob's email onto her local computer to read it.**

## POP3 (Post Office Protocol)

- When Alice logs in and checks her email from Bob, the POP3 mailbox doesn't keep a copy of the email.
- Alice would not be able to log into another computer to view Bob's email, as it already has been downloaded from the mail server.
- POP3 has a security benefit, as the email will not exist on a server the recipient doesn't control.

## IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol)

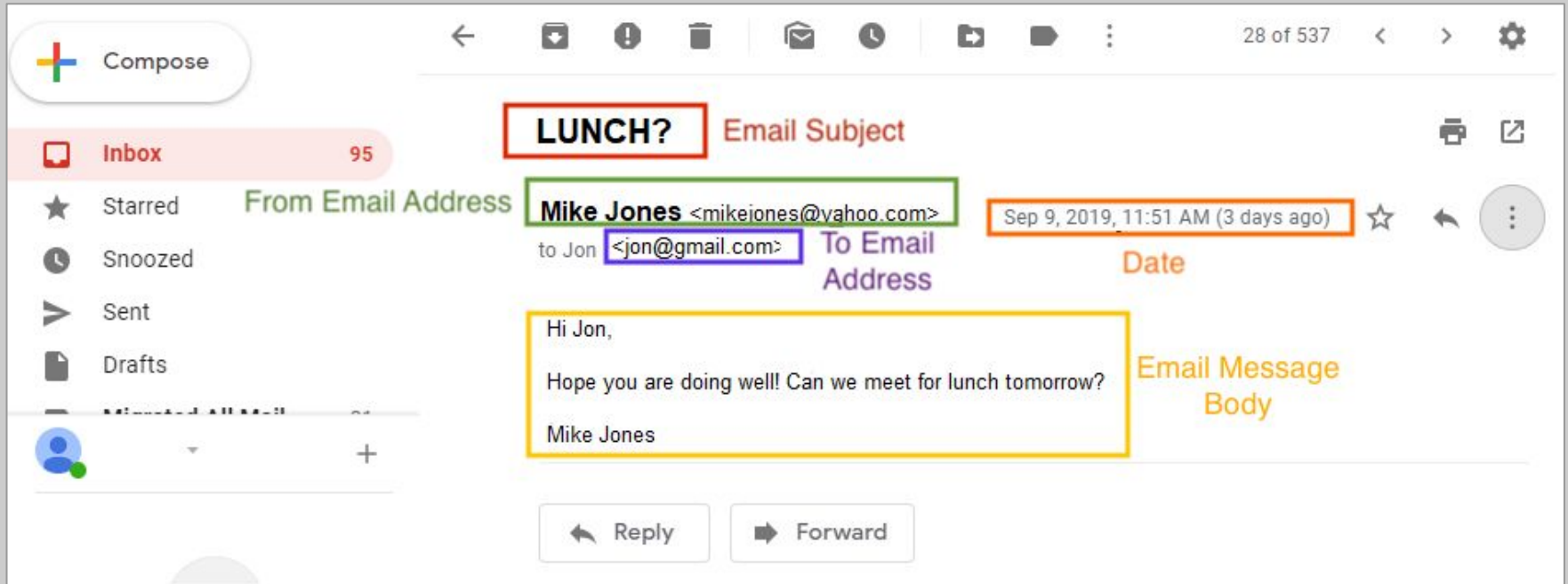
- A copy of the email is kept on the server.
- Even after Alice logs in and check her email from Bob, she can check it again from another computer.
- IMAP has the benefit of preventing data from being lost, as it backs up emails on a server.



To complete the previous steps, emails use headers made up of specific fields.

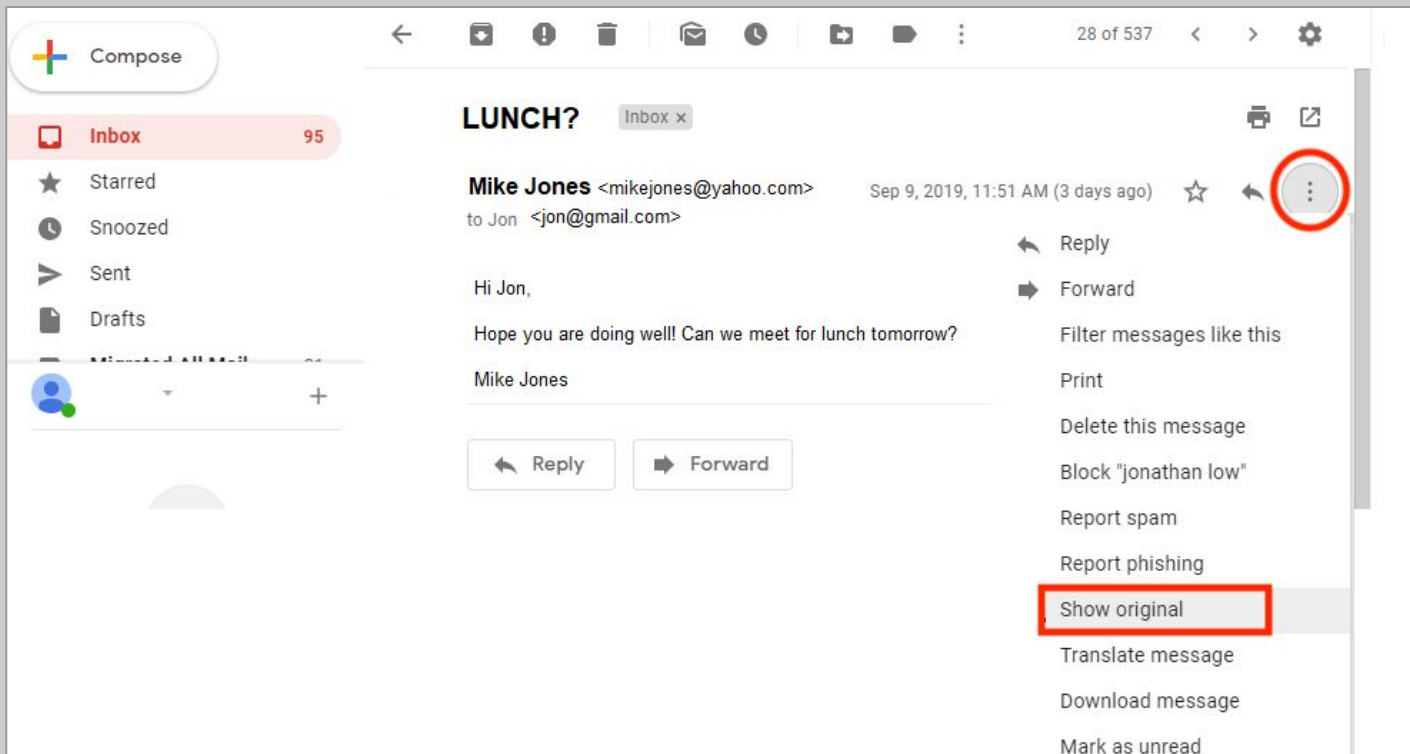
# Familiar Fields

If you've ever sent an email, you're probably familiar with the following fields:



# Unfamiliar Fields

More fields are revealed by reviewing the complete raw email:



# Unfamiliar Fields

The raw email will reveal other fields:

**Return-Path:** Specifies the sender's return email.

```
X00fr8tramL68M1zUkM71Wxo7kjCRBMMKx14Bpr09Ce/SXeBWx0n6brnOCYrX9p2Esh1
yv6w==
ARC-Authentication-Results: i=1; mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of low3939@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=jlow3939@yahoo.com;
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
Return-Path: mikejones@yahoo.com
Received: from sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com (sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com. [74.6.130.41])
  by mx.google.com with ESMTPS id x24si2689288qki.191.2019.09.09.08.51.49
  for jon@gmail.com
  (version=TLS1_2 cipher=ECDSA-RSA-AES128-GCM-SHA256 bits=128/128);
Mon, 09 Sep 2019 08:51:49 -0700 (PDT)
Received-SPF: pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender) client-
ip = 74.6.130.41
Authentication-Results: mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=mikejones@yahoo.com
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed; d=yahoo.com; s=s2048; t=1568044308;
bh=zzRzCtdQVeTPhBCGURh17oXsJc5ZtLXUVRxWcME6BoU=; h=Date:From:To:Subject:References:From:Subject;
b=sfPlnnum3Q+jaa7VDAeIaaK3hC1A+/90yomtT9d/HkawiOWw0dLX592mkDo25tr+7h2A4pNURhUzJcm6swm3l4l80Wk54qFQ/mxoAUvOK7RHH6T7OXNHwONXhHrQ
UX1BnEbl+OSuhCM7xGr01u3YVHHMBSI1z3kb0ECOC0Jtb38vNcoaP3Z7tMuwwb0d+9Pvwx6x74tLIRlGxTw/eube135paHvjJqUe6IA3HF8F1dKrTRCJtVwgBEN3Fu
vBa+OwFe9ya/s5eZHN/S3jYxM/MbpSG1mcYNk1/+saGNeRVWJrUlWcwubr14mdFjv4ps/R4Jnczoc1j8vM01MniKYd4Q==
```

Return Path

# Un-Familiar Fields

**Received:** Shows a list of the mail servers, illustrating the path of the email from source to destination.

```
X00Fr8tramL68M1zUkM71Wxo7kjCRBMMKx14Bpr09Ce/SXeBWX0n6brnOCYrX9p2Eshl
yv6W==
ARC-Authentication-Results: i=1; mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of low3939@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=jlow3939@yahoo.com;
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
Return-Path: mikejones@yahoo.com
Received: from sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com (sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com. [74.6.130.41])
  by mx.google.com with ESMTPS id x24si2689288qki.191.2019.09.08.51.49
  for jon@gmail.com
  (version=TLS1_2 cipher=ECDHE-RSA-AES128-GCM-SHA256 bits=128/128);
Mon, 09 Sep 2019 08:51:49 -0700 (PDT)
Received-SPF: pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender) client-
ip = 74.6.130.41
Authentication-Results: mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=mikejones@yahoo.com
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed; d=yahoo.com; s=s2048; t=1568044308;
bh=zzRzCtdQVeTPhBCGURh17oXsJc5ZtLXUVRxWcME6BoU; h=Date:From:To:Subject:References:From:Subject;
b=sfPlnnum3Q+jaa7VDAEIaaK3hC1A+/90yomTt9d/HkawiOww0dLX592mkDo25tr+7h2A4pNURhUzJcm6swm3l4l80wk54qFQ/mxoAUvOK7RHh6T7OXNHwONXhHrQ
UX1BnEbl+OSuhCM7xGr01u3YVHHMBSI1z3kb0ECOC0Jtb38vNcoaPJZ7tMuwwb0d+9Pvwx6x74tLIRlGxTw/eube135paHvjJqUe6IA3HF8F1dKrTRCJtVwgBEN3Fu
vBa+OwFe9ya/s5eZhn/S3jYxM/MbpSG1mcYNkl/+saGNeRVWJrUlWcwubr14mdFjv4ps/R4Jnczoc1j8vM01MniKYd4Q==
```

Source IP

# Unfamiliar Fields

**Message-ID:** Unique string created by the sending mail server as an identifier of the email.

**Received SPF:** The SPF verification field.

```
X00fr8tramL68M1zUkM71Wxo7kjCRBMMKx14Bpr09Ce/SXeBWXOn6brnOCYrX9p2Eshl
yv6w==
ARC-Authentication-Results: i=1; mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of jlow3939@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=jlow3939@yahoo.com;
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
Return-Path: mikejones@yahoo.com
Received: from sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com (sonic308-2.consmr.mail.bf2.yahoo.com. [74.6.130.41])
  by mx.google.com with ESMTPS id x24si2689288qki.191.2019.09.09.08.51.49
  for jon@gmail.com
  (version=TLS1_2 cipher=ECDHE-RSA-AES128-GCM-SHA256 bits=128/128);
  Mon, 09 Sep 2019 08:51:49 -0700 (PDT)
Received-SPF: pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender) client-
ip=74.6.130.41;
Authentication-Results: mx.google.com;
  dkim=pass header.i=@yahoo.com header.s=s2048 header.b=sfPlnnum;
  spf=pass (google.com: domain of mikejones@yahoo.com designates 74.6.130.41 as permitted sender)
smtp.mailfrom=mikejones@yahoo.com
  dmarc=pass (p=REJECT sp=REJECT dis=NONE) header.from=yahoo.com
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed; d=yahoo.com; s=s2048; t=1568044308;
bh=zzRzCtdQVeTPhBCGURh17oXsJc5ZtLXUVRxWcME6BoU=; h=Date:From:To:Subject:References:From:Subject;
b=sfPlnnum3Q+jaa7VdaEiaaK3hC1A+/90yomtT9d/Hkawi0Ww0dLX592mkDo25tr+7h2A4pNURhUzJcm6swm3l4l80Wk54qFQ/mxoAUvOK7RHh6T7OXNHwONXhHrQ
UX1BnEbL+0SuhCM7xGr01u3YVHHMBSI1z3kb0ECOC0Jtb38vNcoaPJZ7tMuwwbOd+9Pvwx6x74tLIR1GxTw/eube135paHvjJqUe6IA3HF8F1dKrTRCJtVwgBEN3Fu
vBa+OwFe9ya/s5eZHN/S3jYxM/MbpSG1mcYNk1/+saGNeRVWJrUlWcwubr14mdFjv4ps/R4Jnczoc1j8vM01MniKYd4Q==
```





## **Activity:** Email Networking

In this activity, you will continue to play the role of a security analyst for Acme Corp.

Your task is to analyze the header records of suspicious emails and document several data points.

**Suggested Time:**  
15 minutes







**Time's Up!** Let's Review.

# Email Security Issue

# Spam

---

Spam is the sending of unsolicited emails.



- Spam is not inherently a security threat.
- But reports state over 60% of all emails are spam. A large number of emails can be very inconvenient for organizations.
- Many email systems have developed advanced methods for detecting and stopping spam emails.
- These involve using SPF records, matching lists of known spam senders, and keyword identification.

# Confidential Emails on Unencrypted Channels

Since emails are almost always unencrypted, there are risks of interception and unwanted reviewing as they are routed across servers.

Several technologies can be used to encrypt confidential emails, such as PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) and S/MIME (Secure/Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions).



# Email Spoofing

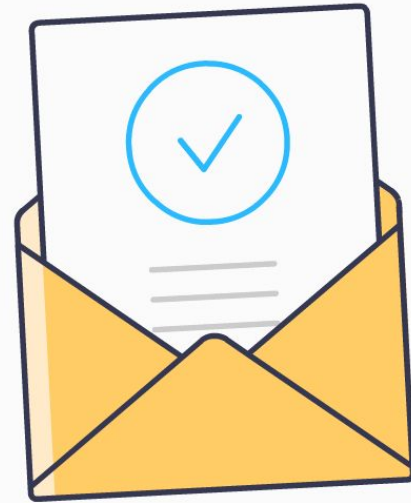
Email spoofing is designing emails to trick the receiver into believing they're coming from a trusted source.

**Phishing**—the attempt to gain sensitive information from an email recipient—is often accomplished through email spoofing. For example:

- A scammer sends you an email pretending to be from your bank, asking you to update your username and password.
- The email seems legitimate, but may contain a phishing URL leading to a fake bank login page that will capture your banking login info.



According to a recent report from Microsoft, phishing attacks are by far the most common cybersecurity threat— increasing a massive 250% since the previous report was published.






**Email spoofing** can be detected with several methods that analyze raw email headers in sent emails.




# Method 1: the *From* Email Header

Spammers and phishers often disguise their true source email, changing the displayed email source to a name the recipient will trust or recognize.



In an email claiming to be from Citibank, you can view the raw email header and check the **From** or **Return-Path** field to display the true email address of the sender.



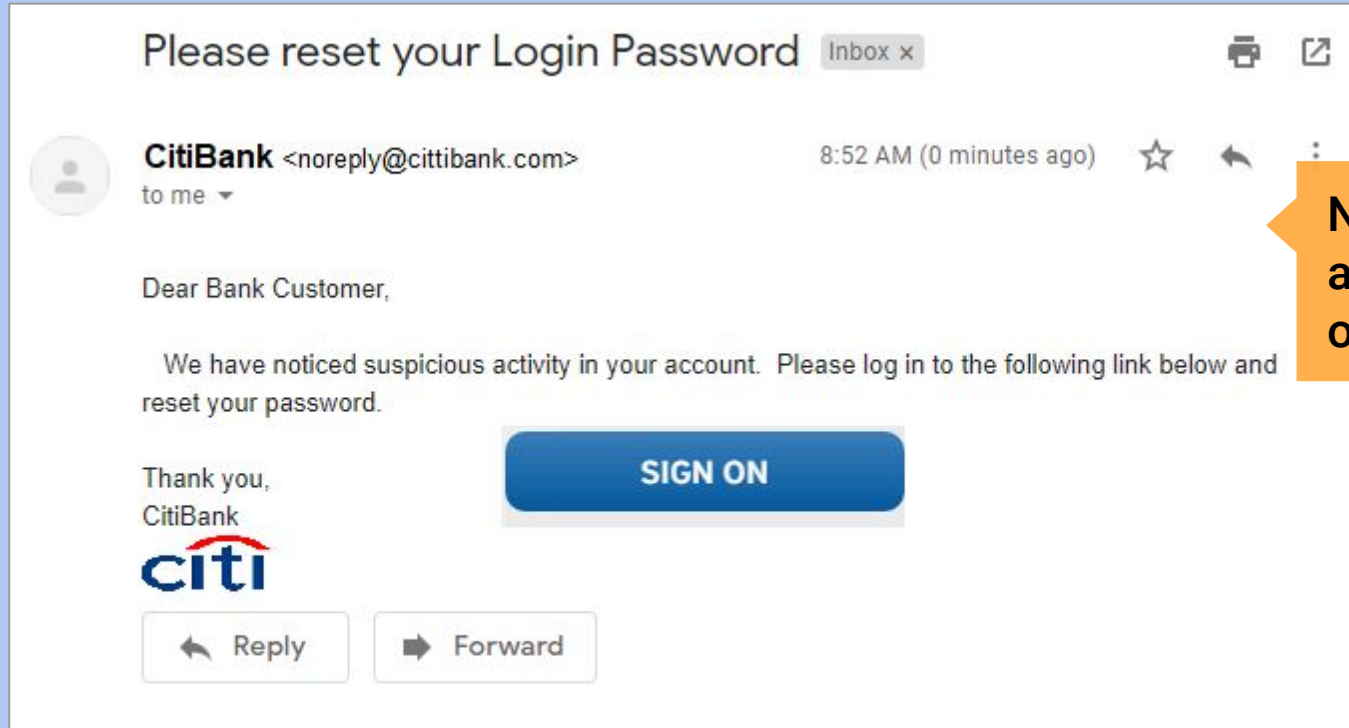
If the email address is **sdfs2344dsf@yahoo.com**, and doesn't have an @citibank domain, this indicates a malicious email.





# Method 1: the *From* Email Header

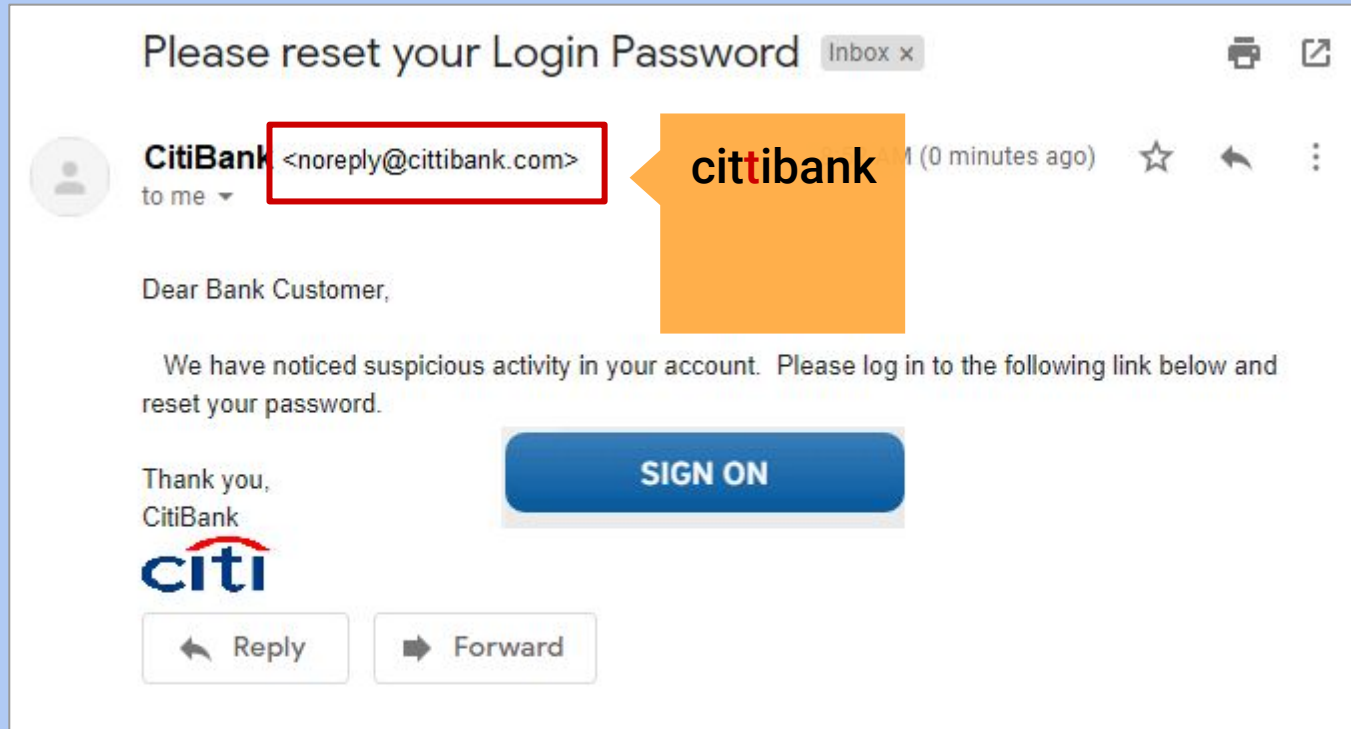
Spammers may also make slight changes to the sending domain name.



Notice  
anything  
off?

# Method 1: the *From* Email Header

Spammers may also make slight changes to the sending domain name.




## Method 2: the *Received-SPF* Email Header

---

**Remember:** the SPF record is used to identify which mail servers are authorized to send emails on behalf of a domain.


**Received-SPF** is an email header that displays the results of validating the SPF record.

Received-SPF uses the IP address from the **Received** field and determines if it's an IP of an authorized sender.



If the IP **is** accepted it will display as a "pass."

Received-SPF: pass (google.com: domain of michael@acme.com designates 76.87.4.15 as permitted sender)



If the IP **is not** accepted it will display as a "fail."

Received-SPF: fail (google.com: domain of michael@acmers.com does not designate 174.81.74.11 as permitted sender)

## Method 3: the *Received* Email Header

---

The **Received** header includes the source IP of the sending mail server. For example, you receive an email from a US-based government organization, such as the IRS.



The IP address from the Received header record is 41 . 32 . 23 . 52.



When looking up this IP on a web tool like [ARIN](#), the location of the IP is shown to be in Egypt.



This indicates that the email is probably not legitimate. It's unlikely a US government organization would have a mail server in Africa.



## **Activity:** Email Security

In this activity, you will continue to play the role of a security analyst for Acme Corp.

You must further analyze the emails to determine which are spoofed and which are legitimate.

**Suggested Time:**  
10 minutes





**Time's Up!** Let's Review.



 Countdown timer

15:00

(with alarm)

The remaining class time will be dedicated to reviewing networking and network security concepts covered in the past two units.





## **Activity:** Networking Concepts Review

In this activity, you will review the most important topics of the past few classes: HTTP, ARP, DHCP, TCP and UDP, network devices, topologies, and routing, and network addressing.

**Suggested Time:**  
15 minutes





**Time's Up!** Let's Review.



## **Activity:** Networking Attacks Review

In this activity, you will review ARP attacks, DHCP attacks, TCP attacks, wireless attacks, and email attacks.

**Suggested Time:**  
15 Minutes





**Time's Up!** Let's Review.

# Class Objectives

---

By the end of today's class, you will be able to:



Validate DNS records using `nslookup`.



Describe the processes, protocols, and headers associated with email communication.



Analyze email headers to identify suspicious content.