**Simple Mail Transfer Protocol**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[Jump to navigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#mw-head) [Jump to search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#searchInput)

"SMTP" redirects here. For the email delivery company, see [SMTP (company)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_(company)). For Short Message Transfer Protocol, see [GSM 03.40](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GSM_03.40).

|  |
| --- |
| [**Internet protocol suite**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_protocol_suite) |
| [**Application layer**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Application_layer) |
| * [BGP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Border_Gateway_Protocol) * [DHCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic_Host_Configuration_Protocol) * [DNS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System) * [FTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_Transfer_Protocol) * [HTTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypertext_Transfer_Protocol) * [HTTPS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTPS) * [IMAP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Access_Protocol) * [LDAP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightweight_Directory_Access_Protocol) * [MGCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_Gateway_Control_Protocol) * [MQTT](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MQTT) * [NNTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_News_Transfer_Protocol) * [NTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_Time_Protocol) * [POP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Protocol) * [PTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precision_Time_Protocol) * [ONC/RPC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Network_Computing_Remote_Procedure_Call) * [RTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_Transport_Protocol) * [RTSP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_Time_Streaming_Protocol) * [RIP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Routing_Information_Protocol) * [SIP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Session_Initiation_Protocol) * SMTP * [SNMP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Network_Management_Protocol) * [SSH](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secure_Shell) * [Telnet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telnet) * [TLS/SSL](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transport_Layer_Security) * [XMPP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XMPP) * [*more...*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Application_layer_protocols) |
| [**Transport layer**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transport_layer) |
| * [TCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) * [UDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_Datagram_Protocol) * [DCCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datagram_Congestion_Control_Protocol) * [SCTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stream_Control_Transmission_Protocol) * [RSVP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resource_Reservation_Protocol) * [*more...*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Transport_layer_protocols) |
| [**Internet layer**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_layer) |
| * [IP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Protocol)   + [IPv4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPv4)   + [IPv6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPv6) * [ICMP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Control_Message_Protocol) * [ICMPv6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Control_Message_Protocol_for_IPv6) * [ECN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Explicit_Congestion_Notification) * [IGMP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Group_Management_Protocol) * [IPsec](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPsec) * [*more...*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Internet_layer_protocols) |
| [**Link layer**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Link_layer) |
| * [ARP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Address_Resolution_Protocol) * [NDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neighbor_Discovery_Protocol) * [OSPF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Shortest_Path_First) * [Tunnels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunneling_protocol)   + [L2TP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layer_2_Tunneling_Protocol) * [PPP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point-to-Point_Protocol) * [MAC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medium_access_control)   + [Ethernet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethernet)   + [Wi-Fi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wi-Fi)   + [DSL](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_subscriber_line)   + [ISDN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integrated_Services_Digital_Network)   + [FDDI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiber_Distributed_Data_Interface) * [*more...*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Link_protocols) |
| * [v](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:IPstack) * [t](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:IPstack) * [e](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:IPstack&action=edit) |

The **Simple Mail Transfer Protocol** (**SMTP**) is a [communication protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication_protocol) for [electronic mail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email) transmission. As an [Internet standard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_standard), SMTP was first defined in 1982 by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [821](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc821), and updated in 2008 by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5321](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321) to [Extended SMTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_SMTP) additions, which is the protocol variety in widespread use today. Mail servers and other [message transfer agents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Message_transfer_agent) use SMTP to send and receive mail messages. SMTP servers commonly use the [Transmission Control Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) on [port number](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_number) 25.

User-level [email clients](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_client) typically use SMTP only for sending messages to a mail server for relaying, and typically submit outgoing email to the mail server on port 587 or 465 as per [RFC 8314](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8314). For retrieving messages, [IMAP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Access_Protocol) and [POP3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Protocol) are standard, but proprietary servers also often implement proprietary protocols, e.g., [Exchange ActiveSync](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exchange_ActiveSync).



**Contents**

* [1 History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#History)
* [2 Mail processing model](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Mail_processing_model)
* [3 Protocol overview](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Protocol_overview)
  + [3.1 SMTP vs mail retrieval](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#SMTP_vs_mail_retrieval)
  + [3.2 Remote Message Queue Starting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Remote_Message_Queue_Starting)
* [4 Outgoing mail SMTP server](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Outgoing_mail_SMTP_server)
  + [4.1 Outgoing mail server access restrictions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Outgoing_mail_server_access_restrictions)
    - [4.1.1 Restricting access by location](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Restricting_access_by_location)
    - [4.1.2 Client authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Client_authentication)
    - [4.1.3 Open relay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Open_relay)
  + [4.2 Ports](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Ports)
* [5 SMTP transport example](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#SMTP_transport_example)
* [6 Extended Simple Mail Transfer Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Extended_Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol)
  + [6.1 Optional extensions discovery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Optional_extensions_discovery)
  + [6.2 Binary data transfer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Binary_data_transfer)
  + [6.3 Mail delivery mechanism extensions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Mail_delivery_mechanism_extensions)
  + [6.4 On-Demand Mail Relay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#On-Demand_Mail_Relay)
  + [6.5 Internationalization extension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Internationalization_extension)
  + [6.6 Security extensions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Security_extensions)
    - [6.6.1 SMTP Authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#SMTP_Authentication)
    - [6.6.2 STARTTLS or "Opportunistic TLS"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#STARTTLS_or_"Opportunistic_TLS")
    - [6.6.3 SMTP MTA Strict Transport Security](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#SMTP_MTA_Strict_Transport_Security)
    - [6.6.4 SMTP TLS Reporting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#SMTP_TLS_Reporting)
* [7 Spoofing and spamming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Spoofing_and_spamming)
* [8 Implementations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Implementations)
* [9 Related requests for comments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Related_requests_for_comments)
* [10 See also](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#See_also)
* [11 Notes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Notes)
* [12 References](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#References)

**History**

Various forms of one-to-one [electronic messaging](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging) were used in the 1960s. Users communicated using systems developed for specific [mainframe computers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainframe_computer). As more computers were interconnected, especially in the U.S. Government's [ARPANET](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARPANET), standards were developed to permit exchange of messages between different operating systems. SMTP grew out of these standards developed during the 1970s.

SMTP traces its roots to two implementations described in 1971: the Mail Box Protocol, whose implementation has been disputed,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-1) but is discussed in [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [196](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc196) and other RFCs, and the SNDMSG program, which, according to [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2235](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2235), [Ray Tomlinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Tomlinson) of [BBN](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBN_Technologies) invented for [TENEX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TENEX_(operating_system)) computers to send mail messages across the ARPANET.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-4) Fewer than 50 hosts were connected to the ARPANET at this time.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-5)

Further implementations include FTP Mail[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-6) and Mail Protocol, both from 1973.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-7) Development work continued throughout the 1970s, until the ARPANET transitioned into the modern Internet around 1980. [Jon Postel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jon_Postel) then proposed a [Mail Transfer Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_Transfer_Protocol) in 1980 that began to remove the mail's reliance on [FTP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_Transfer_Protocol).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-8) SMTP was published as [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [788](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc788) in November 1981, also by Postel.

The SMTP standard was developed around the same time as [Usenet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet), a one to many communication network with some similarities.

SMTP became widely used in the early 1980s. At the time, it was a complement to [Unix to Unix Copy Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UUCP) (UUCP) mail, which was better suited for handling email transfers between machines that were intermittently connected. SMTP, on the other hand, works best when both the sending and receiving machines are connected to the network all the time. Both use a [store and forward](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Store_and_forward) mechanism and are examples of [push technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Push_technology). Though Usenet's [newsgroups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet_newsgroup) are still propagated with UUCP between servers,[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-9) UUCP as a mail transport has virtually disappeared[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-10) along with the "[bang paths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bang_path)" it used as message routing headers.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-11)

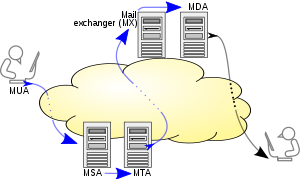
[Sendmail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sendmail), released with [4.1cBSD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berkeley_Software_Distribution) in 1982, soon after [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [788](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc788) was published in November 1981, was one of the first mail transfer agents to implement SMTP.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-12) Over time, as BSD Unix became the most popular operating system on the Internet, Sendmail became the most common [MTA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Message_Transfer_Agent) (mail transfer agent).[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-13) Some other popular SMTP server programs include [Postfix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postfix_(software)), [qmail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qmail), [Novell GroupWise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GroupWise), [Exim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exim), [Novell NetMail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%2BNetMail), [Microsoft Exchange Server](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_Exchange_Server) and [Oracle Communications Messaging Server](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle_Communications_Messaging_Server).

Message submission ([RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2476](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2476)) and [SMTP-AUTH](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_Authentication) ([RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2554](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2554)) were introduced in 1998 and 1999, both describing new trends in email delivery. Originally, SMTP servers were typically internal to an organization, receiving mail for the organization *from the outside*, and relaying messages from the organization *to the outside*. But as time went on, SMTP servers (mail transfer agents), in practice, were expanding their roles to become [message submission agents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_submission_agent) for [Mail user agents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_client), some of which were now relaying mail *from the outside* of an organization. (e.g. a company executive wishes to send email while on a trip using the corporate SMTP server.) This issue, a consequence of the rapid expansion and popularity of the [World Wide Web](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Wide_Web), meant that SMTP had to include specific rules and methods for relaying mail and authenticating users to prevent abuses such as relaying of unsolicited email ([spam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_spam)). Work on message submission ([RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2476](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2476)) was originally started because popular mail servers would often rewrite mail in an attempt to fix problems in it, for example, adding a domain name to an unqualified address. This behavior is helpful when the message being fixed is an initial submission, but dangerous and harmful when the message originated elsewhere and is being relayed. Cleanly separating mail into submission and relay was seen as a way to permit and encourage rewriting submissions while prohibiting rewriting relay. As spam became more prevalent, it was also seen as a way to provide authorization for mail being sent out from an organization, as well as traceability. This separation of relay and submission quickly became a foundation for modern email security practices.

As this protocol started out purely [ASCII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII) text-based, it did not deal well with binary files, or characters in many non-English languages. Standards such as Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions ([MIME](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIME)) were developed to encode binary files for transfer through SMTP. Mail transfer agents (MTAs) developed after [Sendmail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sendmail) also tended to be implemented [8-bit-clean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/8-bit-clean), so that the alternate "just send eight" strategy could be used to transmit arbitrary text data (in any 8-bit ASCII-like character encoding) via SMTP. [Mojibake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mojibake) was still a problem due to differing character set mappings between vendors, although the email addresses themselves still allowed only [ASCII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII). 8-bit-clean MTAs today tend to support the [8BITMIME](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_SMTP#8BITMIME) extension, permitting binary files to be transmitted almost as easily as plain text. Recently the [SMTPUTF8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_SMTP#SMTPUTF8) extension was created to support [UTF-8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UTF-8) text, allowing international content and addresses in non-[Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_script) scripts like [Cyrillic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrillic_script) or [Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_characters).

Many people contributed to the core SMTP specifications, among them [Jon Postel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jon_Postel), [Eric Allman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Allman), Dave Crocker, [Ned Freed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ned_Freed), Randall Gellens, [John Klensin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Klensin), and [Keith Moore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Moore).

**Mail processing model**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:SMTP-transfer-model.svg)

Blue arrows depict implementation of SMTP variations.

Email is submitted by a mail client ([mail user agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_user_agent), MUA) to a mail server ([mail submission agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_submission_agent), MSA) using SMTP on [TCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) port 587. Most [mailbox providers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mailbox_Provider) still allow submission on traditional port 25. The MSA delivers the mail to its mail transfer agent ([mail transfer agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_transfer_agent), MTA). Often, these two agents are instances of the same software launched with different options on the same machine. Local processing can be done either on a single machine, or split among multiple machines; mail agent processes on one machine can share files, but if processing is on multiple machines, they transfer messages between each other using SMTP, where each machine is configured to use the next machine as a [smart host](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart_host). Each process is an MTA (an SMTP server) in its own right.

The boundary MTA uses the [Domain name system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_name_system) (DNS) to look up the mail exchanger record (MX record) for the recipient's domain (the part of the [email address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_address) on the right of @). The MX record contains the name of the target host. Based on the target host and other factors, the MTA selects an exchange server: see the article [MX record](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MX_record). The MTA connects to the exchange server as an SMTP client.

Message transfer can occur in a single connection between two MTAs, or in a series of hops through intermediary systems. A receiving SMTP server may be the ultimate destination, an intermediate "relay" (that is, it stores and forwards the message) or a "gateway" (that is, it may forward the message using some protocol other than SMTP). Each hop is a formal handoff of responsibility for the message, whereby the receiving server must either deliver the message or properly report the failure to do so.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-14)

Once the final hop accepts the incoming message, it hands it to a [mail delivery agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_delivery_agent) (MDA) for local delivery. An MDA saves messages in the relevant [mailbox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_mailbox) format. As with sending, this reception can be done using one or multiple computers, but in the diagram above the MDA is depicted as one box near the mail exchanger box. An MDA may deliver messages directly to storage, or [forward](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_forwarding) them over a network using SMTP or other protocol such as [Local Mail Transfer Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_Mail_Transfer_Protocol) (LMTP), a derivative of SMTP designed for this purpose.

Once delivered to the local mail server, the mail is stored for batch retrieval by authenticated mail clients (MUAs). Mail is retrieved by end-user applications, called email clients, using [Internet Message Access Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Access_Protocol) (IMAP), a protocol that both facilitates access to mail and manages stored mail, or the [Post Office Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Protocol) (POP) which typically uses the traditional [mbox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mbox) mail file format or a proprietary system such as Microsoft Exchange/Outlook or [Lotus Notes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lotus_Notes)/[Domino](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_Lotus_Domino). [Webmail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webmail) clients may use either method, but the retrieval protocol is often not a formal standard.

SMTP defines message *transport*, not the message *content*. Thus, it defines the mail *envelope* and its parameters, such as the [envelope sender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Envelope_sender), but not the header (except *trace information*) nor the body of the message itself. STD 10 and [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5321](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321) define SMTP (the envelope), while STD 11 and [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5322](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5322) define the message (header and body), formally referred to as the [Internet Message Format](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Format).

**Protocol overview**

SMTP is a [connection-oriented](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connection-oriented_communication), [text-based protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text-based_protocol) in which a mail sender communicates with a mail receiver by issuing command strings and supplying necessary data over a reliable ordered data stream channel, typically a [Transmission Control Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) (TCP) connection. An *SMTP session* consists of commands originated by an SMTP [client](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Client_(computing)) (the initiating [agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_agent), sender, or transmitter) and corresponding responses from the SMTP [server](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Server_(computing)) (the listening agent, or receiver) so that the session is opened, and session parameters are exchanged. A session may include zero or more SMTP transactions. An *SMTP transaction* consists of three command/reply sequences:

1. **MAIL** command, to establish the return address, also called return-path,[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-15) reverse-path,[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-16) [bounce address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bounce_address), mfrom, or envelope sender.
2. **RCPT** command, to establish a recipient of the message. This command can be issued multiple times, one for each recipient. These addresses are also part of the envelope.
3. **DATA** to signal the beginning of the *message text*; the content of the message, as opposed to its envelope. It consists of a *message header* and a *message body* separated by an empty line. DATA is actually a group of commands, and the server replies twice: once to the *DATA command* itself, to acknowledge that it is ready to receive the text, and the second time after the end-of-data sequence, to either accept or reject the entire message.

Besides the intermediate reply for DATA, each server's reply can be either positive (2xx reply codes) or negative. Negative replies can be permanent (5xx codes) or transient (4xx codes). A **reject** is a permanent failure and the client should send a bounce message to the server it received it from. A **drop** is a positive response followed by message discard rather than delivery.

The initiating host, the SMTP client, can be either an end-user's [email client](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_client), functionally identified as a [mail user agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_user_agent) (MUA), or a relay server's [mail transfer agent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mail_transfer_agent) (MTA), that is an SMTP server acting as an SMTP client, in the relevant session, in order to relay mail. Fully capable SMTP servers maintain queues of messages for retrying message transmissions that resulted in transient failures.

A MUA knows the *outgoing mail* SMTP server from its configuration. A relay server typically determines which server to connect to by looking up the [MX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MX_record) (Mail eXchange) [DNS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System) resource record for each recipient's [domain name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_name). If no MX record is found, a conformant relaying server (not all are) instead looks up the [A record](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_record). Relay servers can also be configured to use a [smart host](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart_host). A relay server initiates a [TCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) connection to the server on the "[well-known port](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Well-known_port)" for SMTP: [port](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TCP_and_UDP_port) 25, or for connecting to an MSA, port 587. The main difference between an MTA and an MSA is that connecting to an MSA requires [SMTP Authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_Authentication).

**SMTP vs mail retrieval**

SMTP is a delivery protocol only. In normal use, mail is "pushed" to a destination mail server (or next-hop mail server) as it arrives. Mail is routed based on the destination server, not the individual user(s) to which it is addressed. Other protocols, such as the [Post Office Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Protocol) (POP) and the [Internet Message Access Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Access_Protocol) (IMAP) are specifically designed for use by individual users retrieving messages and managing [mail boxes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_mailbox). To permit an intermittently-connected mail server to *pull* messages from a remote server on demand, SMTP has a feature to initiate mail queue processing on a remote server (see [Remote Message Queue Starting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#Remote_Message_Queue_Starting) below). POP and IMAP are unsuitable protocols for relaying mail by intermittently-connected machines; they are designed to operate after final delivery, when information critical to the correct operation of mail relay (the "mail envelope") has been removed.

**Remote Message Queue Starting**

Remote Message Queue Starting enables a remote host to start processing of the mail queue on a server so it may receive messages destined to it by sending a corresponding command. The original TURN command was deemed insecure[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-17) and was extended in [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1985](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1985) with the ETRN command which operates more securely using an [authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authentication) method based on [Domain Name System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System) information.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-18)

**Outgoing mail SMTP server**

An [email client](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_client) needs to know the IP address of its initial SMTP server and this has to be given as part of its configuration (usually given as a [DNS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_name_system) name). This server will deliver outgoing messages on behalf of the user.

**Outgoing mail server access restrictions**

Server administrators need to impose some control on which clients can use the server. This enables them to deal with abuse, for example [spam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spam_(electronic)). Two solutions have been in common use:

* In the past, many systems imposed usage restrictions by the *location* of the client, only permitting usage by clients whose IP address is one that the server administrators control. Usage from any other client IP address is disallowed.
* Modern SMTP servers typically offer an alternative system that requires [authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authentication) of clients by credentials before allowing access.

**Restricting access by location**

Under this system, an [ISP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISP)'s SMTP server will not allow access by users who are outside the ISP's network. More precisely, the server may only allow access to users with an IP address provided by the ISP, which is equivalent to requiring that they are connected to the Internet using that same ISP. A mobile user may often be on a network other than that of their normal ISP, and will then find that sending email fails because the configured SMTP server choice is no longer accessible.

This system has several variations. For example, an organisation's SMTP server may only provide service to users on the same network, enforcing this by firewalling to block access by users on the wider Internet. Or the server may perform range checks on the client's IP address. These methods were typically used by corporations and institutions such as universities which provided an SMTP server for outbound mail only for use internally within the organisation. However, most of these bodies now use client authentication methods, as described below.

Where a user is mobile, and may use different ISPs to connect to the internet, this kind of usage restriction is onerous, and altering the configured outbound email SMTP server address is impractical. It is highly desirable to be able to use email client configuration information that does not need to change.

**Client authentication**

Modern SMTP servers typically require [authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authentication) of clients by credentials before allowing access, rather than restricting access by location as described earlier. This more flexible system is friendly to mobile users and allows them to have a fixed choice of configured outbound SMTP server. [SMTP Authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_Authentication), often abbreviated SMTP AUTH, is an extension of the SMTP in order to log in using an authentication mechanism.

**Open relay**

A server that is accessible on the wider Internet and does not enforce these kinds of access restrictions is known as an [open relay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_relay). This is now generally considered a bad practice worthy of [blacklisting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blacklist_(computing)).

**Ports**

Communication between mail servers generally uses the standard [TCP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol) port 25 designated for SMTP.

Mail *clients* however generally don't use this, instead using specific "submission" ports. Mail services generally accept email submission from clients on one of:

* 587 (Submission), as formalized in [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6409](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6409) (previously [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2476](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2476))
* 465 This port was deprecated after [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2487](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2487), until the issue of [RFC 8314](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8314).

Port 2525 and others may be used by some individual providers, but have never been officially supported.

Most [Internet service providers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_service_providers) now block all outgoing port 25 traffic from their customers as an anti-spam measure.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-19) For the same reason, businesses will typically configure their firewall to only allow outgoing port 25 traffic from their designated mail servers.

**SMTP transport example**

A typical example of sending a message via SMTP to two mailboxes (*alice* and *theboss*) located in the same mail domain (*example.com* or *localhost.com*) is reproduced in the following session exchange. (In this example, the conversation parts are prefixed with *S:* and *C:*, for *server* and *client*, respectively; these labels are not part of the exchange.)

After the message sender (SMTP client) establishes a reliable communications channel to the message receiver (SMTP server), the session is opened with a greeting by the server, usually containing its [fully qualified domain name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fully_qualified_domain_name) (FQDN), in this case *smtp.example.com*. The client initiates its dialog by responding with a HELO command identifying itself in the command's parameter with its FQDN (or an address literal if none is available).[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-rfc5321-20)

S: 220 smtp.example.com ESMTP Postfix

C: HELO relay.example.com

S: 250 smtp.example.com, I am glad to meet you

C: MAIL FROM:<bob@example.com>

S: 250 Ok

C: RCPT TO:<alice@example.com>

S: 250 Ok

C: RCPT TO:<theboss@example.com>

S: 250 Ok

C: DATA

S: 354 End data with <CR><LF>.<CR><LF>

C: From: "Bob Example" <bob@example.com>

C: To: Alice Example <alice@example.com>

C: Cc: theboss@example.com

C: Date: Tue, 15 Jan 2008 16:02:43 -0500

C: Subject: Test message

C:

C: Hello Alice.

C: This is a test message with 5 header fields and 4 lines in the message body.

C: Your friend,

C: Bob

C: .

S: 250 Ok: queued as 12345

C: QUIT

S: 221 Bye

{The server closes the connection}

The client notifies the receiver of the originating email address of the message in a MAIL FROM command. This is also the return or [bounce address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bounce_address) in case the message cannot be delivered. In this example the email message is sent to two mailboxes on the same SMTP server: one for each recipient listed in the To and Cc header fields. The corresponding SMTP command is RCPT TO. Each successful reception and execution of a command is acknowledged by the server with a [result code and response message](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_SMTP_server_return_codes) (e.g., 250 Ok).

The transmission of the body of the mail message is initiated with a DATA command after which it is transmitted verbatim line by line and is terminated with an end-of-data sequence. This sequence consists of a new-line (<CR><LF>), a single [full stop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_stop) (period), followed by another new-line. Since a message body can contain a line with just a period as part of the text, the client sends *two* periods every time a line starts with a period; correspondingly, the server replaces every sequence of two periods at the beginning of a line with a single one. Such escaping method is called *dot-stuffing*.

The server's positive reply to the end-of-data, as exemplified, implies that the server has taken the responsibility of delivering the message. A message can be doubled if there is a communication failure at this time, e.g. due to a power shortage: Until the sender has received that 250 reply, it must assume the message was not delivered. On the other hand, after the receiver has decided to accept the message, it must assume the message has been delivered to it. Thus, during this time span, both agents have active copies of the message that they will try to deliver.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-21) The probability that a communication failure occurs exactly at this step is directly proportional to the amount of filtering that the server performs on the message body, most often for anti-spam purposes. The limiting timeout is specified to be 10 minutes.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-22)

The QUIT command ends the session. If the email has other recipients located elsewhere, the client would QUIT and connect to an appropriate SMTP server for subsequent recipients after the current destination(s) had been queued. The information that the client sends in the HELO and MAIL FROM commands are added (not seen in example code) as additional header fields to the message by the receiving server. It adds a Received and Return-Path header field, respectively.

Some clients are implemented to close the connection after the message is accepted (250 Ok: queued as 12345), so the last two lines may actually be omitted. This causes an error on the server when trying to send the 221 reply.

**Extended Simple Mail Transfer Protocol**

The original SMTP protocol supported only unauthenticated unencrypted ASCII text communications susceptible to a [man-in-the-middle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man-in-the-middle) attack, spoofing, and spamming, and requiring any binary data to be encoded to readable text before transmission. A number of optional extensions specify various mechanisms to address these problems.

**Optional extensions discovery**

Clients learn a server's supported options by using the EHLO greeting, as exemplified below, instead of the original HELO (example above). Clients fall back to HELO only if the server does not support SMTP extensions.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-23)

Modern clients may use the ESMTP extension keyword SIZE to query the server for the maximum message size that will be accepted. Older clients and servers may try to transfer excessively sized messages that will be rejected after consuming network resources, including connect time to network links that is paid by the minute.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-24)

Users can manually determine in advance the maximum size accepted by ESMTP servers. The client replaces the HELO command with the EHLO command.

S: 220 smtp2.example.com ESMTP Postfix

C: EHLO bob.example.com

S: 250-smtp2.example.com Hello bob.example.org [192.0.2.201]

S: 250-SIZE 14680064

S: 250-PIPELINING

S: 250 HELP

Thus *smtp2.example.com* declares that it can accept a fixed maximum message size no larger than 14,680,064 [octets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octet_(computing)) (8-bit bytes).

In the simplest case, an ESMTP server declares a maximum SIZE immediately after receiving an EHLO. According to [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1870](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1870), however, the numeric parameter to the SIZE extension in the EHLO response is optional. Clients may instead, when issuing a MAIL FROM command, include a numeric estimate of the size of the message they are transferring, so that the server can refuse receipt of overly-large messages.

**Binary data transfer**

Original SMTP supports only a single body of ASCII text, therefore any binary data needs to be encoded as text into that body of the message before transfer, and then decoded by the recipient. [Binary-to-text encodings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binary-to-text_encoding), such as [uuencode](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uuencode) and [BinHex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BinHex) were typically used.

The 8BITMIME command was developed to address this. It was standardized in 1994 as [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1652](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1652)[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-25) It facilitates the [transparent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transparency_(telecommunication)) exchange of [e-mail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-mail) messages containing octets outside the seven-bit [ASCII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII) character set by encoding them as [MIME](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIME) content parts, typically encoded with [Base64](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base64).

**Mail delivery mechanism extensions**

**On-Demand Mail Relay**

Main article: [On-Demand Mail Relay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On-Demand_Mail_Relay)

**On-Demand Mail Relay** (**ODMR**) is an [SMTP extension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_extension) standardized in [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2645](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2645) that allows an intermittently-connected SMTP server to receive email queued for it when it is connected.

**Internationalization extension**

Main article: [International email](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_email)

Original SMTP supports email addresses composed of [ASCII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII) characters only, which is inconvenient for users whose native script is not Latin based, or who use [diacritic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diacritic) not in the ASCII character set. This limitation was alleviated via extensions enabling UTF-8 in address names. [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5336](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5336) introduced experimental[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-26) UTF8SMTP command and later was superseded by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6531](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6531) that introduced SMTPUTF8 command. These extensions provide support for multi-byte and non-ASCII characters in email addresses, such as those with diacritics and other language characters such as [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) and [Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_language).[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-27)

Current support is limited, but there is strong interest in broad adoption of [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6531](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6531) and the related RFCs in countries like [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China) that have a large user base where Latin (ASCII) is a foreign script.

**Security extensions**

Mail delivery can occur both over plain text and encrypted connections, however the communicating parties might not know in advance of other party's ability to use secure channel.

**SMTP Authentication**

Main article: [SMTP Authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMTP_Authentication)

SMTP Authentication, often abbreviated SMTP AUTH, describes a mechanism for a client to log in using any authentication mechanism supported by the server. It is mainly used by submission servers, where authentication is mandatory. Multiple RFCs exist that provide different variations of the mechanism and update each other.

**STARTTLS or "Opportunistic TLS"**

Main articles: [Opportunistic TLS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opportunistic_TLS) and [Email encryption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_encryption)

SMTP extensions describe STARTTLS command that enables server to tell client that it supports encrypted communications and client to request an upgrade to a secure channel. STARTTLS is effective only against passive observation attacks, since the STARTTLS negotiation happens in plain text and an active attacker can trivially remove STARTTLS command, such attack is sometimes called STRIPTLS (client would think that server did not send STARTTLS header so does not support STARTTLS, while server would think that client did not respond to STARTTLS header and thus does not support STARTTLS).[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-:0-28) Note that STARTTLS is also defined for [IMAP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Message_Access_Protocol) and [POP3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Protocol) in other RFCs, but these protocols serve different purposes: SMTP is used for communication between message transfer agents, while IMAP and POP3 are for end clients and message transfer agents.

[Electronic Frontier Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_Frontier_Foundation) maintains a "STARTTLS Everywhere" list that similarly to "[HTTPS Everywhere](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTPS_Everywhere)" list allows relying parties to discover others supporting secure communication without prior communication.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-29)

[RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [8314](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8314) officially declared plain text obsolete and recommend always using TLS, adding ports with implicit TLS.

**SMTP MTA Strict Transport Security**

A newer 2018 [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [8461](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8461)called "SMTP MTA Strict Transport Security (MTA-STS)" aims to addresses the problem of active adversary by defining a protocol for mail servers to declare their ability to use secure channels in specific files on the server and specific [DNS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System) TXT records. The relying party would regularly check existence of such record, and cache it for the amount of time specified in the record and never communicate over insecure channels until record expires.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-:0-28) Note that MTA-STS records apply only to SMTP traffic between mail servers while communications between end client and the mail server are protected by [HTTPS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTPS), [HTTP Strict Transport Security](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTP_Strict_Transport_Security).

In April 2019 Google Mail announced support for MTA-STS.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-:1-30)

**SMTP TLS Reporting**

A number of protocols allows secure delivery of messages, but they can fail due to misconfigurations or deliberate active interference, leading to undelivered messages or delivery over unencrypted or unauthenticated channels. [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [8460](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8460) "SMTP TLS Reporting" describes a reporting mechanism and format for sharing statistics and specific information about potential failures with recipient domains. Recipient domains can then use this information to both detect potential attacks and diagnose unintentional misconfigurations.

In April 2019 Google Mail announced support for SMTP TLS Reporting.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-:1-30)

**Spoofing and spamming**

Main articles: [Anti-spam techniques](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-spam_techniques) and [Email authentication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_authentication)

The original design of SMTP had no facility to authenticate senders, or check that servers were authorized to send on their behalf, with the result that [email spoofing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_spoofing) is possible, and commonly used in [email spam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_spam) and [phishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phishing).

Occasional proposals are made to modify SMTP extensively or replace it completely. One example of this is [Internet Mail 2000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Mail_2000), but neither it, nor any other has made much headway in the face of the [network effect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_effect) of the huge installed base of classic SMTP. Instead, mail servers now use a range of techniques, including [DomainKeys Identified Mail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DomainKeys_Identified_Mail), [Sender Policy Framework](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sender_Policy_Framework) and [DMARC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DMARC), [DNSBLs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DNSBL) and [greylisting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greylisting_(email)) to reject or quarantine suspicious emails.

**Implementations**

There is also SMTP proxy implementation as for example [nginx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nginx).[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Mail_Transfer_Protocol#cite_note-31)

Main articles: [List of mail server software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mail_server_software) and [Comparison of mail servers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_mail_servers)

**Related requests for comments**

* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1123](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1123) – Requirements for Internet Hosts—Application and Support (STD 3)
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1870](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1870) – SMTP Service Extension for Message Size Declaration (оbsoletes: [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1653](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1653))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2505](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2505) – Anti-Spam Recommendations for SMTP MTAs (BCP 30)
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2821](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2821) – Simple Mail Transfer Protocol
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2920](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2920) – SMTP Service Extension for Command Pipelining (STD 60)
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3030](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3030) – SMTP Service Extensions for Transmission of Large and Binary MIME Messages
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3207](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3207) – SMTP Service Extension for Secure SMTP over Transport Layer Security (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2487](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2487))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3461](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3461) – SMTP Service Extension for Delivery Status Notifications (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1891](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1891))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3463](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3463) – Enhanced Status Codes for SMTP (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1893](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1893), updated by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5248](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5248))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3464](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3464) – An Extensible Message Format for Delivery Status Notifications (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1894](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1894))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3798](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3798) – Message Disposition Notification (updates [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3461](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3461))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3834](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3834) – Recommendations for Automatic Responses to Electronic Mail
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [4952](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc4952) – Overview and Framework for Internationalized Email (updated by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5336](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5336))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [4954](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc4954) – SMTP Service Extension for Authentication (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2554](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2554), updates [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3463](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3463), updated by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5248](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5248))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5068](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5068) – Email Submission Operations: Access and Accountability Requirements (BCP 134)
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5248](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5248) – A Registry for SMTP Enhanced Mail System Status Codes (BCP 138) (updates [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3463](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3463))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5321](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321) – The Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [821](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc821) aka STD 10, [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [974](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc974), [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1869](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1869), [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2821](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2821), updates [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1123](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1123))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5322](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5322) – Internet Message Format (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [822](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc822) aka STD 11, and [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2822](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2822))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5504](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5504) – Downgrading Mechanism for Email Address Internationalization
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6409](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6409) – Message Submission for Mail (STD 72) (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [4409](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc4409), [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2476](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2476))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6522](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6522) – The Multipart/Report Content Type for the Reporting of Mail System Administrative Messages (obsoletes [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [3462](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc3462), and in turn [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1892](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1892))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6531](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6531) – SMTP Extension for Internationalized Email Addresses (updates [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2821](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2821), [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2822](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2822), [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [4952](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc4952), and [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5336](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5336))
* [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [8314](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc8314) – Cleartext Considered Obsolete: Use of Transport Layer Security (TLS) for Email Submission and Access

**See also**

* [Bounce address](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bounce_address)
* [Email encryption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_encryption)
* [Ident](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ident_protocol)
* [List of SMTP server return codes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_SMTP_server_return_codes)
* [POP before SMTP / SMTP after POP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/POP_before_SMTP)
* [Sender Policy Framework](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sender_Policy_Framework) (SPF)
* [Variable envelope return path](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variable_envelope_return_path)
* [DKIM](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DKIM)

**Notes**

 [The History of Electronic Mail](http://www.multicians.org/thvv/mail-history.html)*,* [*Tom Van Vleck*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Van_Vleck)*: "*It is not clear this protocol was ever implemented*"*

  [*The First Network Email*](https://openmap.bbn.com/~tomlinso/ray/firstemailframe.html), [Ray Tomlinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Tomlinson), BBN

  Picture of "[The First Email Computer](https://openmap.bbn.com/~tomlinso/ray/ka10.html)" by Dan Murphy, a [PDP-10](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PDP-10)

  [Dan Murphy's TENEX and TOPS-20 Papers](http://www.opost.com/dlm/tenex/) [Archived](https://web.archive.org/web/20071118204016/http:/www.opost.com/dlm/tenex/) November 18, 2007, at the [Wayback Machine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayback_Machine)

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [2235](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc2235)

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [469](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc469) – Network Mail Meeting Summary

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [524](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc524) – A Proposed Mail Protocol

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [772](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc772) – Mail Transfer Protocol

  [Tldp.org](http://tldp.org/HOWTO/Usenet-News-HOWTO/x64.html)

  [draft-barber-uucp-project-conclusion-05 – The Conclusion of the UUCP Mapping Project](https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-barber-uucp-project-conclusion-05)

  The article about [sender rewriting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sender_Rewriting_Scheme) contains technical background info about the early SMTP history and source routing before [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1123](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1123).

  *Eric Allman (1983),* [*Sendmail – An Internetwork Mail Router*](https://docs.freebsd.org/44doc/smm/09.sendmail/paper.pdf) *(PDF), BSD UNIX documentation set, Berkeley: University of California, retrieved June 29, 2012*

  *Craig Partridge (2008),* [*The Technical Development of Internet Email*](https://web.archive.org/web/20110512165437/http:/www.ir.bbn.com/~craig/email.pdf) *(PDF), IEEE Annals of the History of Computing,* ***30****, IEEE Computer Society, pp. 3–29,* [*doi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doi_(identifier))*:*[*10.1109/MAHC.2008.32*](https://doi.org/10.1109%2FMAHC.2008.32)*, archived from* [*the original*](http://www.ir.bbn.com/~craig/email.pdf) *(PDF) on May 12, 2011*

  [*John Klensin*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Klensin) *(October 2008).* [*"Basic Structure"*](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321#section-2.1)*.* [*Simple Mail Transfer Protocol*](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321)*.* [*IETF*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Engineering_Task_Force)*. sec. 2.1.* [*doi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doi_(identifier))*:*[*10.17487/RFC5321*](https://doi.org/10.17487%2FRFC5321)*.* [*RFC*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier))[*5321*](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321)*. Retrieved January 16, 2016.*

  ["The MAIL, RCPT, and DATA verbs"](http://cr.yp.to/smtp/mail.html), [D. J. Bernstein]

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5321](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321) Section-7.2

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1985](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1985), *SMTP Service Extension for Remote Message Queue Starting*, J. De Winter, The Internet Society (August 1996)

  *Systems, Message.* [*"Message Systems Introduces Latest Version Of Momentum With New API-Driven Capabilities"*](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/message-systems-introduces-latest-version-of-momentum-with-new-api-driven-capabilities-277568381.html)*. www.prnewswire.com. Retrieved July 19, 2020.*

  *Cara Garretson (2005).* [*"ISPs Pitch In to Stop Spam"*](http://www.pcworld.com/article/116843/article.html)*.* [*PC World*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PC_World)*. Retrieved January 18, 2016. Last month, the Anti-Spam Technical Alliance, formed last year by Yahoo, America Online, EarthLink, and Microsoft, issued a list of antispam recommendations that includes filtering Port 25.*

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [5321](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321), *Simple Mail Transfer Protocol*, J. Klensin, The Internet Society (October 2008)

  [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [1047](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1047)

  [rfc5321#section-4.5.3.2.6](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5321#section-4.5.3.2.6)

  *John Klensin; Ned Freed; Marshall T. Rose; Einar A. Stefferud; Dave Crocker (November 1995).* [*SMTP Service Extensions*](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1869)*.* [*IETF*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Engineering_Task_Force)*.* [*doi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doi_(identifier))*:*[*10.17487/RFC1869*](https://doi.org/10.17487%2FRFC1869)*.* [*RFC*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier))[*1869*](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1869)*.*

  [*"MAIL Parameters"*](http://www.iana.org/assignments/mail-parameters/mail-parameters.txt)*. IANA. Retrieved April 3, 2016.*

  Which was obsoleted in 2011 by [RFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFC_(identifier)) [6152](https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6152) corresponding to the then new [STD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_standard) 71

  [*"MAIL Parameters"*](https://www.iana.org/assignments/mail-parameters/mail-parameters.txt)*. November 15, 2018.*

  *Jiankang Yao (December 19, 2014).* [*"Chinese email address"*](http://www.ietf.org/mail-archive/web/ima/current/msg05395.html)*. EAI (Mailing list).* [*IETF*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Engineering_Task_Force)*. Retrieved May 24, 2016.*

  [*"Introducing MTA Strict Transport Security (MTA-STS) | Hardenize Blog"*](https://www.hardenize.com/blog/mta-sts)*. www.hardenize.com. Retrieved April 25, 2019.*

  [*"STARTTLS Everywhere"*](https://starttls-everywhere.org/)*. EFF. Retrieved August 15, 2019.*

  *Cimpanu, Catalin.* [*"Gmail becomes first major email provider to support MTA-STS and TLS Reporting"*](https://www.zdnet.com/article/gmail-becomes-first-major-email-provider-to-support-mta-sts-and-tls-reporting/)*. ZDNet. Retrieved April 25, 2019.*

* 1.  [*"NGINX Docs | Configuring NGINX as a Mail Proxy Server"*](https://docs.nginx.com/nginx/admin-guide/mail-proxy/mail-proxy/)*.*

**References**

 *Hughes, L (1998). Internet E-mail: Protocols, Standards and Implementation. Artech House Publishers.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-0-89006-939-4*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-0-89006-939-4)*.*

 *Hunt, C (2003). sendmail Cookbook. O'Reilly Media.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-0-596-00471-2*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-0-596-00471-2)*.*

 *Johnson, K (2000). Internet Email Protocols: A Developer's Guide. Addison-Wesley Professional.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-0-201-43288-6*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-0-201-43288-6)*.*

 *Loshin, P (1999). Essential Email Standards: RFCs and Protocols Made Practical. John Wiley & Sons.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-0-471-34597-8*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-0-471-34597-8)*.*

 *Rhoton, J (1999). Programmer's Guide to Internet Mail: SMTP, POP, IMAP, and LDAP. Elsevier.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-1-55558-212-8*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-1-55558-212-8)*.*

 *Wood, D (1999).* [*Programming Internet Mail*](https://archive.org/details/livesofcaptivere00petz)*. O'Reilly.* [*ISBN*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISBN_(identifier))[*978-1-56592-479-6*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-1-56592-479-6)*.*