The MTA’s job is to receive an email from an MUA or other MTA and get it one step closer to the final destination. The process of getting an email between two parties might take several MTAs. It is common for organizations to [*relay*](gloss01.html#gloss_346) email from MTAs in the field to a smaller set of outbound MTAs. Relaying happens when an MTA forwards a message on behalf of another MTA.

This relaying step is also where a great deal of spam email comes from. Any server that is relaying should take care to make sure that the email being relayed is either from a known source or going to a known source. Without this check, someone could anonymously funnel the latest request for help from the fake prince of a small nation through your server and you would forward the email for him.

Locking down your MTA to prevent spam is a weighty topic, but fortunately Linux distributions come minimally configured to prevent this, and the detailed configuration of an MTA is not in scope for the exam.