

# Tech In The News

## Assignment: Future Emails

Headphones Needed:  YES  NO

Step One:

[WATCH THIS VIDEO](#) Video from YEAR 2030  
LOOK AT THE DATES OF THESE EMAILS

Subject	Date	Size
<a href="#">Dine out tonight at Red Lobster with this \$100 Gift Card. Click her...</a>	10/3/26 10:28 AM	3 KB
 <a href="#">Get a Year of Amazon Prime</a>	5/14/18 11:49 AM	9 KB
<a href="#">Luxury Mattress At An Affordable Price</a>	5/14/18 11:38 AM	17 KB
<a href="#">Ellen O'Shea's invitation is waiting for your response</a>	5/14/18 11:23 AM	38 KB

Compose Get Mail Search Mail Address Book Settings Log Out

Mark As Unread Mark As Read Allow Senders Delete Report SPAM Move message(s) to: OK

< | << Prev | Ne: >> | >

From	Subject	Date	Size
Protect Your Home	<a href="#">\$850 value in home protection equipment with ADT Monitored Sy...</a>	10/3/26 10:28 AM	2 KB

Step Two:

Read the Article at the bottom of this document  
Review the information

Step Three <https://www.futureme.org/letters/new>  
Create a Future email, set the date one year from now. Take a screen capture (Snipping Tool) of the email, save the screen capture to the Desktop (or take a pix with your phone). Send the email, and confirm using the link to service sends to your email. Follow the steps, requested.

Step Four:

Send the pix to Mr. Amerikaner.

Submit Your Assignment :

To Mr. Amerikaner Using:

## How can people send me spam emails from the future?


Is this an exploit of the email system of some sort? I receive a great deal of spam every day, and my accounts in Yahoo and Gmail sometimes show me spam emails from the future. Yes, the future.

Sometimes it will give me a day ahead when they send it, which could mean they are a day ahead via time zones, but sometimes I have also seen a week ahead, but rarely I find emails sent a month in the future.

Are these spammers exploiting a part of email that allows them to spoof the timestamp of the email? I have always been curious how they are managing to send me mail from the future.

email

asked Jul 29 '15 at 4:30

 **yuritsuki**  
309 3 7

33 In principle it's not much different from sending a letter through the post with a future date written on it. – bds1 Jul 29 '15 at 11:33

7 I noticed that many years ago, and then that use disappeared. I suppose spammers wanted to come first in your list of emails, but then people figured it out and deleted all mail from the future without ever looking at it (I certainly did) which made this useless. It will probably come back every ten years. – gnasher729 Jul 29 '15 at 12:18

5 Did you check your clock to verify that you aren't in the past? This is a basic use of headers known since 20 years ☹️! – daniel Azuelos Jul 29 '15 at 13:05

14 I made this comment 3 weeks from now. – Jon Hanna Jul 29 '15 at 16:30

15 Have you offended any time travelers? – etherealflix Jul 29 '15 at 16:53


### 3 Answers

That's not an "exploit", rather the way e-mail works.

Datetime, sender, receiver, and all other headers of an e-mail message can be set by the sender to whatever value he wishes; mail protocols make no security check on them. Hence, spoofing the sender of an e-mail (as spammers, scammers, and phishers often do) it's a child's play.

As Priyank correctly said, if you look at the full headers of the message you received you'll see that only the first hop (the sender) bears a date in the future; all the other hops (the MTAs between the sender and you) are correctly timestamped with the actual date.

answered Jul 29 '15 at 7:16

 **dr01**  
4,498 4 13 30

13 unless it isn't a real spamm mail from the future. in that case the other time stamps including his own ISP's one would be from the same date :D – Zaibis Jul 29 '15 at 11:34

1 @zaibis unless it is. – DRF Jul 29 '15 at 19:49

2 @DRF yeah thats what i mean. I'm not a native speaker and didn't knew "unless" itself contains already the "not" in its meaning. – Zaibis Jul 30 '15 at 6:39

It is kind of possible.

Another possibility, which would be EXTREMELY rare, is that the time on the mail server is wrong.

In your case, try checking the headers of the spam emails.

answered Jul 29 '15 at 5:31



Priyank Gupta  
3,511 15 26

- 
- 3 This is fine but is any significant amount of spam sent by using mail clients such as Outlook? More likely, the source is a script, which either sets a specific time or is running on a machine with an incorrectly set clock (probably, actually, some random person's computer on a botnet). – David Richerby Jul 29 '15 at 10:53
- 
- 1 Well, as dr01 mentioned, it is also very much possible to edit the email headers. Did you check the email headers? – Priyank Gupta Jul 29 '15 at 10:58
- 

Most messaging systems do allow drag-in/out copying of emails from the client to the desktop. So if you want to send spams with any dates you want, there are various options.

Actually you can quickly code a mass mailer in Python and change automatically whatever parameter you want in the headers, including time ([how to change email's header programmatically](#))

An other option is that you keep your previous mass mailer in Python (I mention Python because I experienced it a lot and it fits very well for such situations) and execute it in Windows OS virtual machines and change the system date automatically to whatever you want so that it will appear in the header of your spams ([how to change system date and time programmatically](#))

edited May 23 '17 at 11:33



Community ♦  
1

answered Jul 29 '15 at 6:19

user45139



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 6 Years in a Row

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## Spammer's Trick – Past and Future Dates on Email

*written by Brett M. Christensen*     January 4, 2007

Spammers will use any means at their disposal to get you to notice the garbage they inflict on inbox. One dirty trick that seems to be increasingly employed by spammers is to change the date on incoming emails so that they are more likely to gain your attention when they cross your in

Most commonly, the spam arrives with a future date – sometimes months or even years ahead. If you have your email client configured to sort by date, this future date means that the spam message will “float” at the bottom (or top) of the list of emails. The message will remain in this position until you move or delete it or until the real date overtakes the spammer's bogus date

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Conversely, the spammer may set a date sometime in the past, thereby burying the spam at the "read" end of the email list or somewhere in the middle. Generally, your email client will indicate that you have an unread message somewhere in the email folder you are reading, even after you have apparently read all of the latest messages. If the folder has a lot of messages, you will need to search through the list of read emails to locate the unread one with the bogus past date. This process tends to focus attention on the garbage email, and this is, of course, the spammer's goal.

The spammers want to increase the chance that their targets will actually read the message. Hopefully, most of us will be wise enough to never do business with spammers under any circumstances. However, the spammer may send many millions of bogus-date spam messages. Perhaps only a handful of these recipients will be swayed into actually buying from the spammer due to the past or future date trick. From the spammer's point of view, gaining those few extra sales is enough to make the bogus-date trick a worthwhile exercise.

Spam is an increasingly severe problem with no easy remedy. One simple way we can help, however, is to learn as much as possible about how spammers operate. Being aware of all the dirty little tricks, and spreading the word to other Internet users, is something that we can all do to make it just that bit harder for spammers to make a profit.

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February 20, 2017

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