

## **CAN THE BAD GUYS HAVE ACCESS TO THOUSANDS OF EMAIL ADDRESSES INCLUDING YOURS?**

Yes, unfortunately, it is possible for bad actors to gain access to thousands of email addresses. There are many ways that this can happen, including through data breaches, phishing attacks, and *the purchase of email lists on the dark web*. Once they have access to these email addresses, they can use them for a variety of malicious purposes, such as sending phishing emails to acquire valuable information, including login credentials and financial info, that allows them to commit other crimes like identity theft.

Spammers can use a variety of methods to exploit legitimate accounts for their own purposes. One common technique is email address forgery, where scammers can manipulate the “From” field of an email to make it appear as if it is coming from a legitimate account. This is possible because email protocols do not verify if addresses are legitimate, allowing scammers to exploit this weakness in the system

Another way spammers can use legitimate accounts is through phishing attacks. They may send emails, calls, texts, or letters that appear to be from a legitimate source in an attempt to trick individuals into disclosing personal information or sending money. These phishing messages may contain links to fake websites designed to look like legitimate ones, where individuals are prompted to enter sensitive information.

Spammers may also create fake profiles on social media or other sites using stolen or copied images and personal information. They may impersonate individuals or organizations in an attempt to gain trust and credibility.

It's important to be cautious when receiving messages from unknown sources and to verify the authenticity of the sender before responding or clicking on any links. If you're unsure if a message is legitimate, it's a good idea to contact the supposed sender directly using contact information you know to be accurate.