



The Handbook

Codex

[http://codex.wordpress.org/Protection From Harvesters](http://codex.wordpress.org/Protection_From_Harvesters)

Version Date

8 August 2005

Protection from Harvesters

E-mail spammers often use programs, known as e-mail harvesters, which scan pages on the Internet for e-mail addresses to collect and send unsolicited e-mail. If your e-mail address is publicly available through your WordPress installation, it may be vulnerable to these kinds of programs. Below are a few simple ways you can protect yourself from spam while still providing an e-mail address to your readers.

Substitute Email Address

A popular solution to e-mail harvesting is to create a "throwaway" e-mail address at free services such as [GMail](http://www.gmail.com) (<http://www.gmail.com>) or [Yahoo Mail](http://www.yahoo.com) (<http://www.yahoo.com>). Set this as your e-mail address in your profile. WordPress makes it easy to display the address on your blog by providing the template tag [the_author_email\(\)](#). Within [The Loop](#) portion of your templates, just add the tag:

```
<?php the_author_email(); ?>
```

You will be able to check e-mail that is specifically sent from your readers. If spam becomes too much of a problem, simply delete this account, create a new one, and change the e-mail address in your profile to the new address. Your site will be immediately updated without having to change any template files.

Disguising Your Email

To "fool" e-mail harvesters, a simple method is to convert the symbols in an e-mail address to words (typically parenthesized). For example, `steve@mac.com` becomes **steve (at) mac (dot) com**. Since this is not recognized as a valid e-mail format, harvesters tend to ignore it. A slightly more complicated approach is to transform or encode characters in an address to their [HTML character entity](#), or numeric character reference, equivalent. This means the letter **a** in an address becomes `a`, the **@** symbol `@`, and so on. These should appear as gobbledygook to harvesters, while your browser renders them correctly.

Unfortunately, WordPress does not allow invalidly formatted e-mail addresses to be used in ones profile, so obfuscating your e-mail address there will not work. For this we turn to a little known WordPress function to automate HTML character entity conversion:

```
<?php echo antispambot(get_the_author_email()); ?>
```

The function `antispambot()` above parses the e-mail address passed by `get_the_author_email()` (*this is the same as [the_author_email\(\)](#), except it returns rather than displays the author's e-mail address*). Use of the `echo` command displays the output of `antispambot()`. An interesting feature is it encodes only portions of an address, and does so randomly so the letters encoded are different each time the page loads, adding a little more firepower to the spam protection arsenal.