

# Today, you cannot get infected by just looking

Opening an email is a safe thing to do.

Having your preview pane open is a safe thing to do, even if you're not around.

Email programs and email services now no longer allow the things that once upon a time made looking at an email risky.

However...

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## You CAN get infected if...

The one thing missing from the discussion above is: attachments.

The ability to attach an arbitrary file to an email message actually predates HTML-formatted email. It remains a convenient way to transfer a file from one place to another.

Unfortunately, the word “arbitrary” is appropriate. *Any* file can be attached to an email, including programs that infect your machine with malware.

That’s why one of the admonitions relating to internet safety is to *never open an attachment you’re not expecting* and that you don’t know for certain is safe.

You **can** get infected by just looking at the contents of an attachment.

## Email safety rules

So, let’s review the rules for safe email:

- Keep your versions of Windows, your browser, and your email program up to date with the latest patches. If a vulnerability is discovered, you want it to be fixed as soon as possible so as to keep things as safe as possible.
- Run appropriate anti-malware software to help keep your system clean.
- Keep your anti-malware software up to date, and most importantly, allow it to keep its databases of malware information as up to date as possible as well.
- *Never* open an attachment unless you expect it, you’re *positive* you know what it is, and you trust the sender.
- *Never* click on a link in an email message unless you’re *positive* you know where it’s going, and you trust the sender.