




# Greylisting

## Fighting SPAM at Towson University

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 =Shortcut  =Advice  =Caution

### What is Greylisting?

*Greylisting* is a simple method of defending Towson University e-mail users against e-mail spam (unsolicited e-mail, usually e-mail used for advertising a product or service). *Greylisting* requires little configuration and modest resources. It is designed to complement existing defenses against spam, and not as a replacement. During the testing phase, OTS was able to block up to 80% of unwanted e-mail with little to no effect on the users.

#### Summary

1. What is Greylisting?
2. How Does It Work?
3. How Does It Affect You?
4. How to Check If a Message Was Affected by Greylisting.

### How Does It Work?

At Towson University, *greylisting* has been implemented as one of the spam fighting methods and works as follows:

1. An external mail server (e.g., a Hotmail server) sends an e-mail to a user at TU.
2. The TU mail hub receives the email from the "unknown" contact and temporarily rejects the e-mail with a "try again later" message.
3. Well-known servers (e.g., Hotmail, Yahoo, and private sector servers) will retry at a later time (usually after 5, 15 or 30 minutes). Servers configured for sending spam are less likely to retry, as it is more efficient for that server to move on to new targets which won't require the spammer to wait. Valid (non-spammer) senders will try at their own retry rates. If the e-mail is resent, all mail from that server will then be allowed without any delay for one day. After that one day passes, the Greylisting process will start all over.

### How Does It Affect You?

Anyone using e-mail at Towson University will likely experience some or all of the following:

1. Fewer overall spam messages delivered to their Towson e-mail mailboxes.
2. Occasional delays in messages coming from outside of Towson University, with delays usually ranging from approximately 5-30 minutes (these delays vary because all mail servers are configured slightly differently).
3. No delays for e-mail originating within TU (students, faculty/staff, listserv, etc.).
4. No delays for e-mail with \*.edu and \*.gov addresses since these domains are not greylisted.

### How to Check If a Message Was Affected by Greylisting

TU e-mail recipients using Outlook are able to determine if an email was delayed and for how long by looking at a particular entry in the delayed e-mail message's header:

1. Right-click on the message and select Options.
2. Scroll down the Internet headers text box until you come to the words "X-Greylist:"
3. The text following the word "X-Greylist:" will tell you if the message was delayed, and if so, how long the sending mail server waited to re-send the message.

 If you have any questions about Greylisting, please call the Help Center at 4-5151.