

# COMPUTER NEWS from the



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As found on the web and other sources

**I NEVER SAID THAT, DON'T BLAME ME, WHAT THE HECK!**

## Was Your Email Hijacked?

Category: [Email](#) From "askbobrankin.com".

A reader asks: 'Can you please help, somehow my email account got hijacked, and now all my friends are getting spam, from me! I am always careful with my password. How could this have happened, and what should I do?'

### Did Spammers Really Hijack Your Email?

The first thing to do is relax. It's quite likely that your account wasn't actually compromised. Sometimes spammers use your email address without actually hacking into your [email account](#). It is relatively easy to "spoof" an email address so that it appears a message is coming from one address when it was really sent from another.

(See [Spammer Using My Email Address](#) to learn more about how this can happen.)

If a virus scan shows nothing unusual, and you can still login to your email account with your password, then most likely no breach has occurred. But just to be safe, I recommend that you change your password. In the worst case, hackers can gain full access to your email account and major trouble ensues.



It's common for a hacker to change your email password so that you cannot log in to your own account. Then they can raid your contact list to harvest valid email addresses to add to his spam list. Also, the hacker now has access to all of your saved email, which may include sensitive personal and financial information. If you've been locked out of your own email account, contact your ISP, or use the "can't access my account" link that appears on the login screen to recover.

An email account can be hijacked in a number of ways. Phishing attacks in which a hacker subtly persuades a user into revealing login passwords are a common hijacking technique. A message, purportedly from your bank or other trusted partner, may tell you that a "security check" requires you to respond with your password. Such claims are always bogus; legitimate organizations never ask you to reveal your password via email, phone, or other means. See [Spear Phishing and Internet Security](#) for more on that.

Many forms of malware ([viruses](#), spyware, etc.) attack for the purpose of gaining access to your computer, in order to enslave it in a botnet, and use it as a spam spewing device. This can happen without you even knowing, until people from all over the world start accusing YOU of being a spammer! See my related article [BOTNET ALERT: Are You Vulnerable?](#) to learn more about botnets.

Keylogger spyware installed on your computer can record every keystroke you type and send the results to a remote operator who can then read your password from the log file. There are several ways to [detect and defeat keyloggers](#).

## Password Safety Tips

Using the same password on multiple [online accounts](#) leaves all of them open to hijacking if just one account is penetrated. Be sure to use unique passwords on email, Facebook, eBay, online [banking](#) and other accounts. Storing passwords to other accounts in one place leaves you vulnerable in a similar way. If one account is hacked, a search through data stored there can yield several other passwords.

Failing to log out of an account when you've finished a session makes it easy for anyone who has access to the computer you used to hijack your account. Always log out of accounts accessed from shared computers, such as those in libraries, schools, Internet cafes, etc. A browser's auto-fill forms feature may reveal your password to someone who uses the same computer you use.

Password guessing is a brute-force hacking method that employs software to try random passwords until one works. Many email accounts go into "lock down" mode after a few failed password attempts, but if yours does not it's possible to get hijacked in this way. If you have a very weak or predictable password, it makes the hackers job that much easier. See my article [Is Your Password Strong Enough?](#) for tips on choosing a strong, [secure password](#).

Server-level attacks against email providers, online stores, or financial institutions go after the password database, attempting to crack [its security](#) and harvest thousands or millions of email addresses and passwords in one swoop. There's not much you can do to prevent this type of attack except to host email only with a reputable service provider who pays attention to security, and use a secure password.

Network packet [monitoring software](#) can sniff out passwords sent over unsecured wireless connections. You should be aware of this type of attack if you use free wifi in a coffee shop, airport, hotel, etc. Use encrypted (https) connections when logging in or [emailing](#) over unsecured public wireless networks. My related article [The Big Problem With Free Wifi Hotspot](#) has some helpful tips on how to stay safe while surfing in Starbucks.

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## SOFTWARE

Every once in a while I run into some programs that you might find useful. I have not tried either program but online reviews were all positive... Again use at your own risk.

'Notepad 2 4.2.25', and 'HealthMonitor 3.1'

Notepad2 4.2.25 Notepad2 is Windows Notepad on steroids, that adds a few features: multiple documents; line, word, and character counts; and some highlighting of tags. HealthMonitor 3.1 HealthMonitor enables you to keep an eye on the health of your computer. It identifies slowdowns and other system issues. For example, it gives a popup if your system memory gets to a certain level, or if your hard drive has only 10 GB free.

## From “Windows Secrets” here is some good information about Solid State Drives (SSD) or more than you wanted to know!

### Do SSDs require special care and feeding?



By Fred Langa

**Early solid-state drives sometimes needed manual intervention to perform well, especially in pre-Win7 PCs. Here's what's needed with today's SSDs and operating systems.**

### Seeking tips for tuning a Windows-based SSD

Phillip Mitchell wants to make the most of his new solid-state hard drive.

- "I recently splurged and bought a 1TB SSD. It's the only drive on my computer. Could you give some advice on how to set up SSDs for best performance?"

"There is a lot of conflicting information out on the Web, such as turn on/off hibernation and/or the pagefile (I have 12GB of memory) and so forth.

"Any advice you can offer would be much appreciated."

The technology for solid-state drives used for desktops and laptops is still relatively new, and some unusual combinations of drive, OS, BIOS, and so on can cause trouble.

But on normal, mainstream setups — i.e., current-generation SSDs on standard Win7 or Win8 PCs — you shouldn't need to do anything special to get the most from your SSD.

Here's what you should know about SSD maintenance.

- **TRIM:** Periodically, SSDs need to be run through a TRIM process ([more info](#)), which prepares previously used sections of the drive for rapid reuse. Without TRIM, an SSD will, over time, drastically slow down.

Both Win7 and Win8 automatically apply TRIM as needed to SSDs. No user intervention is required. (See the Jan. 7, 2010, LangaList Plus [column](#), "Windows, solid-state disks, and 'trim.'")

- **SuperFetch:** The SSD-aware routines in Win7/8 also disable **SuperFetch** ([info](#)) automatically to help improve performance. SSDs are so fast that SuperFetch's file pre-caching would only cause delays, needless drive wear, and wasted disk space.

Windows 7 totally disables SuperFetch; Win8 selectively disables it on SSDs while leaving it enabled for conventional drives. (See the related Microsoft [video clip](#).)

- **Defragging:** The classic method for boosting performance on conventional drives isn't needed on SSDs. The mechanical parts of a standard drive cause various amounts of read/write latency. But an SSD is completely electronic; accessing one data location is just as fast as accessing any other.

Not only is it pointless to rearrange your files on an SSD for improved performance, the process wastes time and causes needless drive wear.

Both Win7 and Win8 know *not* to defrag an SSD. Vista, however, does not; you should manually disable or unschedule defrag operations on SSD-equipped Vista PCs.

- **Partition alignment:** Incorrectly aligned partitions can also reduce drive performance. But all current versions of Windows are partition alignment ([info](#))–aware — both for classic hard drives and SSDs. Again, no user intervention is required. (For more on this topic, see the Oct. 4, 2012, LangaList Plus [column](#), "Drive alignment and solid-state drives.")

So to maximize SSD performance, you don't really need to do anything. Win7 and Win8 generally handle these already fast drives just fine, on their own.

Removing the **pagefile** and/or the **hibernation file** won't improve drive performance per se but does free up drive space.

That's generally a worthy goal, though there are good and bad ways to do it. You'll recall that the pagefile ([info](#)) is disk space used as **virtual memory**. When Windows is running out of space in physical RAM, it temporarily relocates some lower-priority or infrequently changing data from fast RAM to the much slower hard drive — to the pagefile. Effectively, this lets Windows use far more RAM than is actually installed.

Windows can run with either a smaller pagefile or with no pagefile at all — saving disk space. However, if you run lots of apps or really big files, exhausting your physical RAM — and there's no available pagefile — something's gotta give. Apps might crash or fail to load, the OS could stutter or blue-screen, or there could be some other unexpected consequence. In terms of system stability, it could feel like you've turned the clock back to Windows 3.

So you can run your PC without a pagefile, but only if you're careful to never load more programs and data than your RAM can hold. That's not always an easy task to manage. I routinely exceed my main system's 8GB of RAM. When that happens, Windows uses the pagefile to temporarily borrow some disk space. That's how the OS is supposed to work.

Only Phillip can say whether his 12GB of system RAM is sufficient to live without a pagefile. Depending on his computing load, 12GB of RAM might simply delay the onset of trouble. To be safe, he'll need to monitor RAM use and limit the number of apps running at any one time. That's *not* how Windows is supposed to work.

That said, here's how you reduce or delete the pagefile. In a Win7/8 admin account, click Control Panel/System and Security/System. Next, click the **Advanced system settings** link in the left pane. Follow steps 3 through 7 on the Microsoft help [page](#), "Change the size of virtual memory."

**Removing the hibernation file:** Windows creates a hibernation file ([info](#)) when you select either **hibernation** or **hybrid sleep**. (See the MS [FAQ](#), "Sleep and hibernation: frequently asked questions.") A hibernation file stores the full contents of RAM, information about what the CPU is doing, and the state of important system services and devices. When you restart your system, Windows uses the hibernation file to more quickly restore the system to its previous, fully active state.

You can eliminate the hibernation file to save space, if you're willing to forego the hibernation or hybrid-sleep options. But you might also increase the chances of data loss. If your PC is in standard sleep/suspend mode and you lose power or the battery runs down, you will permanently lose any unsaved data.

So, as with the pagefile, I don't recommend disabling hibernation. But of course, it's up to you. For help on removing the hibernation file, see the MS [page](#), "How to disable and re-enable hibernation on a computer that is running Windows." To ensure that hibernation won't reactivate, deselect all hibernation and hybrid sleep options in your PC's power profiles prior to removing the hibernation file.

***A better way to gain SSD space:*** Instead of deleting system files and disabling Windows features, simply enable Windows' built-in file-and-folder compression for your bulkier user folders (e.g., Documents) — or enable drive compression for the entire drive. (See the Sept. 12, 2013, LangaList Plus [item](#), "Two ways to solve a space crunch on SSDs.") Compression can shrink files an average of 30 to 50 percent, so it's an excellent way to maximize space without having to delete system files or give up functionality.

**In short, on Windows 7/8 PCs, you can have all the speed benefits of today's mainstream SSDs without resorting to any special performance tricks.**

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**Quote of the month:**

**Everyone has a right to be stupid.**

**Politicians just abuse the privilege!**

Anonymous.