

# **CHAIN LETTERS—HAVE THEM STOP AT YOUR INBOX**

**Beginners' Kaffee Klatch  
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You have probably received e-mails that suggest that you pass it on to everyone in your Address Book. There are literally thousands of chain letter type e-mails floating around the Web these days and it's been going on for years. And while those kinds of e-mails can be rather convincing, they are all just a big hoax.

One that quickly comes to mind is about a young child who is terminally ill and needs an operation. The e-mail starts off by telling you about the child and her family. It gives you a poem to read that was supposedly written for the child and it then asks you to forward the e-mail to everyone you know. It goes on to tell you that for every forward, a certain amount of money will be given to the family to help with the cost of the operation. The e-mail usually says that some big company, like Microsoft, will be donating the money. The bottom line: it's not true!

The simple truth to all of this is a forwarded e-mail cannot be tracked. So, even if you forward an e-mail like the one described above to every single person you know, there's no way a company like Microsoft could track that to determine how much money it should donate. It's as simple as that! In fact, there's no way anything like that could ever be possible even if we wanted it to. E-mail services just don't work like that. Plus, once an e-mail is forwarded over and over again, it's often too mangled to even detect anything, which makes any type of tracking system impossible.

So, if you ever receive an e-mail that says "Forward this to as many people as you can," don't! Many people say: "Well, maybe I'll forward it just in case it is true." No! That won't help anything either. If you do that, you will only continue the cycle of sending out false information. Once you forward the e-mail, you're basically sending a hoax to all of your friends and family members. There's no good in that. It's best just to delete the e-mail and move on.

Now, if you're convinced that an e-mail you receive is true, there are many resources you can use to check it out before you send it on. One of the most

popular is [Snopes.com](http://Snopes.com). Snopes does a great job of keeping everything up to date and it covers a wide range of topics. You can go to the Web site, type in a few keywords taken from the text of the e-mail you received and you should be able to find some information about it.

In summary, when you come across an e-mail for which you are not sure, it's best to either delete it immediately or at least check it out on a Web site like Snopes. Chances are, it is an e-mail hoax, but if you want to be certain, you have some options. Either way, please keep yourself safe. Nasty e-mails come through our Inboxes everyday and if you're not careful, you may end up being a victim of one of them.