Protecting Yourself

- Develop the habit of scrutinizing every email for key indicators.
- Do NOT supply your Western credentials (Username and Password) to any email request, link, or website unless certain it is for a legitimate Western purpose. (Western will NEVER ask for your password)
- Do NOT click on links embedded anywhere in suspicious email.
- Do NOT open attachments in suspicious email.
- When in doubt if an email or its content are malicious, call the helpdesk at 519-661-8300.
- If the email requires action on your part, find an alternative method of communication to verify with the sender that the request is legitimate.
- Take some time to participate in learning and awareness programs offered by Western.
- If you suspect that you have already participated in, clicked on, or opened, a conversation, a link, or an attachment, please contact security@uwo.ca immediately.
Signs of Spear Phishing

- "Are you available" or "Are you at your desk" - This type of email generally does not include any clear indicators of Spear Phishing. It is an attempt to fool you into responding. Once the attacker has you engaged in a conversation, further emails will be designed to compromise.
- "In a meeting Its Urgent" or "Need help fast" - The sender is too busy to talk and only available via email. Urgency is implied within the subject or body of the email.
- Email "From" and "Reply To" - Either do not match or the spelling of the email address is slightly different than expected. (e.g. Instead of jmortas37@uw.ca the address might be jmortas37@uwco.ca or jmortas37.uwo@gmail.com)
- Authoritative Sender - These types of email appear to have come from someone known to yourself and in a position of authority. (Manger, Director, Professor, Dean, AVP, VP etc.) The intent is generally to get you to pay an invoice, transfer funds, purchase something etc.
- Email Thread is Legitimate - Hijacking of email threads, whereby an attacker embeds themselves into an already ongoing conversation, masquerading as the original person you were communicating to, are becoming more prevalent.

ATTACHMENTS:
- Would this sender ordinarily include attachments?
- Does the name of the attachment make sense and are there any spelling inconsistencies?
- If it is doubt, have someone scan the attachment before opening it.

FROM:
- This email was sent from someone of authority inside Western, but appears unusual or out of character.
- This email was unexpected or is from someone I wouldn’t normally communicate with.
- This email is from outside of Western from someone I do not recognize or is not related to my job responsibilities.
- Is the sender’s email address correct or does it contain small inconsistencies or a wrong domain? (Hover your mouse over the sender’s name to see the actual address)

SUBJECT:
- The subject does not match or is irrelevant to the message content.
- The subject contains wording to indicate importance, urgency or confidentiality.
- How likely is the subject to be true?

LINKS:
- The link is asking you to login or provide your Western credentials. (Never give up without absolute certainty of legitimacy)
- Does the hyper-link point to a legitimate source? (Hover your mouse over the hyper-link to view its real destination)

CONTENT:
- Is the sender asking me to click on a link or open an attachment, possibly to gain something of value or avoid a negative consequence?
- Do the spelling and grammar align with expectations?
- Does the email contain an unusual amount of hyper-links?
- Do I have an uncomfortable feeling about this particular email?

SIGNATURE:
- If the sender is a legitimate Western employee, does the signature match expectations?
- Does the senders role match expectations?
- Real logos and names alone, do not constitute legitimacy

ATTACHMENTS:
- Official UW Email Notification of Payment
- This message was sent with high importance.

CONTENT:
- A refund payment has been processed to you. Attached is the transfer copy for your confirmation and digital signature.

SIGNATURE:
- Julia Marie Mortasin
- Account Payable Administrator
- Western University
- London, ON N6A 3C9
- Monday-Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.
- Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday: 12:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- Sunday: 12:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- Confidentiality Notice
- The information transmitted is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any reader, reproduction, dissemination or other use of any persons or entities other than the intended recipient is prohibited. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from your computer.

Example: Spear Phishing email