

Re: Perplexed – who should I believe?

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Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/microsoft.public.security/2006-02/msg00294.html>

- *From:* "BoaterDave" <BoaterDave@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 19 Feb 2006 22:25:34 -0000
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Alun – THANK YOU! (yes, I know I'm shouting!)

I have a feeling that you (unlike some on these newsgroups) have been to the University of Life!

No-one has bothered to ask HOW I came across a URL with the case of letters reversed.

Ever sceptical after my traumas in the past, I experimented with a link which had been recommended by "an Adviser" on a newsgroup. I followed the link recommended and then copied it from my Browser window into Notepad. I then went to the same Microsoft site, after starting with www.microsoft.com in my Browser. When at the appropriate site, I again copied the URL and pasted it into the same Notepad file. I was fascinated to see that whilst the URL had the identical series of letters and numbers, the case of the letters had been reversed.

My simple enquiry as to "why" seems to have invited unexpected comments!

I shall continue to be cautious, but as you have suggested Alun, I will try to build up my trust in those (especially MVP's) who I am well aware spend a great deal of their time endeavouring to help those less well informed. I do not believe, though, that they should assume that everyone who asks a question is a fool – they may just not be familiar with computers!

David B.

"Alun Jones" <alun@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:BIydndVB_ZXrImXeRVn-qO@xxxxxxxxxxxxx

In article <uzsySoVNGHA.1760@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, "Karl Levinson, mvp" <levinson_k@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

I'm an MVP. I've checked out that link and confirmed it goes to =
Microsoft's site. Microsoft's URLs are generally not case sensitive, so =
that even though the letter case may vary in different links posted on =

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different pages, they go to the same place. Do note that in web pages = and HTML-formatted emails and newsgroup postings, there are a variety of = ways you can have a link that looks like <http://www.microsoft.com> but = that actually goes to a different site if you click on the link [instead = of copying and pasting the link into a web browser].

Karl's correct, but I would still applaud BoaterDave for his concern.

Unless you have a pretty good understanding of URL formats, and the way they are processed, anything more complex than <http://www.example.com/directoryname/filename.html> should be treated as suspicious.

It's a sad fact that Microsoft have these sesquipedalian links for their downloads, that look oh-so-similar to the similarly obfuscated links that are used by phishers to confuse their targets, through public redirectors (Yahoo is the most frequent example I've seen in the past) and the like. I understand why this happens – because it's easier for Microsoft to automate – but it is a mess of code that helps cause the confusion that phishers take advantage of

It's easier to trust the <http://go.microsoft.com/?linkid=4538415> links, because you can retype those. [Links that you can type into the browser yourself are much safer than those that you click – there's always the possibility of a "homograph attack" – something that looks like an 'o', for instance, but isn't the same code to the computer.]

Does that mean it's safe to trust the <http://www.tinyurl.com> links? No, because tinyurl is a public service, that anyone can post a good or bad link to.

So, BoaterDave, maintain that paranoia and distrust of things you don't understand – and build up some trust for people who understand more than you.

Alun.
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