

Understanding How E-mail Works

E-mail has four basic components:

- **Address.** Every person who sends or receives e-mail must have a unique e-mail *address*. An example of an e-mail address is:

john.doe@intel.com

The address has three parts. The first part, the *user name*, identifies a person. The second part is a symbol, @ (pronounced *at*), which indicates the text is an e-mail address. The third part, **intel.com**, tells the web browser what *domain* contains the document. Many kinds of domains exist, depending on the owner's purpose or country of origin. In the United States, most Web sites belong to one of the following four major types of domains:

- Domains that end in *.com* are usually *commercial* or unrestricted use.
 - Domains that end in *.org* are usually *organizations* or unrestricted use.
 - Domains that end in *.edu* are usually educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, and universities.
 - Domains that end in *.gov* are for governments and government agencies in the United States.
- **Message Window.** An e-mail *message window* has two main parts—a header and a body. The *header* area contains the address of the sender and recipient(s) and the subject of the message. The header can also show the date and time when the message was sent or received. In an e-mail message window, the *body* is the contents of the message.
 - **Mail Client.** A computer or application that gets information from another computer or application through a network is called a *client*. A mail client is an application used to send and receive e-mail messages. The computer you are using now is a client. If you are at school, the computer is connected to your school's local network, which is connected to the Internet. If you have an e-mail address, you can send a message to millions of other people who have e-mail addresses worldwide. You use an e-mail client to enter a valid e-mail address, subject, and body in a message.
 - **Mail Server.** When you send an e-mail, your mail client routes it to a *mail server*. Servers are computers that are shared by many users. Because servers have many users, they are powerful computers. If you have an e-mail address at your school, your school's local network connects you to a mail server. When the mail server receives a message you have sent to someone else, it routes the message to another mail server. The mail server uses the address to determine what computer on the Internet should receive the message. The message is then stored on the other mail server until the recipient logs on to the Internet and uses the mail client to pull the message from the server.

You should use caution when sending and receiving e-mail messages. Remember that e-mail is not automatically encrypted, so it is not secure. In most cases, anyone can read e-mail messages, not just the authorized recipients. E-mail messages can be intercepted by dishonest people looking for personal or financial information to use for deceptive or fraudulent purposes.

You also should be aware that e-mail messages are not necessarily private. Your e-mail can be read by the person or organization that owns the mail server. You should never include anything in an e-mail message or attachment that you would not want to become public.