

# Who put @ in your email?



In English it is called simply "at", but other languages have more interesting names. In South Africa it is "monkey's tail"; in Denmark it is often "pig's tail"; in France it is sometimes "little snail"; in Greece it is "little duck"; in Hungary it is "worm"; in Poland it is sometimes "monkey"; in Russia it is usually "little dog", in Sweden it is "elephant's trunk" and Turkish emailers call it simply "ear".

**Today we talk to Ray Tomlinson, the man who invented @ and email.**



## **Q: When and why did you invent email?**

It was in 1971 and I'm not sure there was a real reason for inventing it. It was a fun thing to try out and probably took four to six hours to do. I can't remember exactly how long it took. Less than a day, spread over a week or two.

## **Q: How do you feel about spam and viruses?**

I get annoyed when I get spam. It's a tough problem but we're going to solve it. So far the solutions aren't working – they either filter too much or not enough. We must find a better way to stop spam. Viruses are another problem and you usually get them from an email attachment or a downloaded app or file. For example, an ISP could throw away all emails with attachments, but then email wouldn't be any use. We'll have to find a solution.

## **Q: Does it bother you that you're not a household name – that most people don't know what you've done?**

No, it doesn't bother me. Computer nerds know that I've done it. I get emails from people who say "What you did is great. Why don't you do something about spam? It's a kind of nice that some people are interested in what I did – but it's not the centre of my life.

## **Comprehension**

**Are these sentences below true (T), false (F), or no information (NI)? Correct the false sentences.**

1. Ray Tomlinson said he had invented the computer in 1971.
2. He said it was easy to invent email.
3. He told the interviewer that email was a tough problem.
4. He said that they were going to solve the problem of spam.
5. He said that solutions to spam were working.
6. He told the interviewer that he got lots of emails.
7. He said computer nerds didn't know that he had invented email.
8. Emails to Ray said what he had done was great.
9. Ray said it was nice that no one was interested in what he had done.

T	F	NI