How Email Works

Video transcript for 'How Email Works'

In the past, sending mail used to take ages. People sent letters, and receiving one was the social highlight of your week.

Nowadays, global communication is almost instant. You type an email, hit send and, in seconds, it's in your friend's inbox – whether they're just down the road, or in another country. But how?

There are different domain names used for email addresses - this is the bit that comes after the **@** symbol.

Depending on which email provider you use, your email address will end differently. If they are registered in the UK they might end with **co.uk**, in France **.fr**.

To send email, you might use an email client. This is a piece of software installed on your computer, and it connects automatically to your mail server.

Or you can use web-based email, which is accessed via a web browser. Meaning you can access it from any computer – but you have to be online.

In either case, the mail gets sent by an outgoing mail server. The outgoing server looks up the address of the inbound server.

At the inbound server, the message is sent into the user's mailbox according to the bit in front of the **@** symbol.

When you send an email using a mail client the computer follows a set of guidelines, known as protocols.

A protocol is basically a set procedure or system of rules for doing things. **SMTP** (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) is a set of guidelines for sending email.

And **POP** (Post Office Protocol) is a set of guidelines for receiving email.

So whenever you want to send mail to people, you don't need to POP to the post box! And you can get to know your friends so much quicker…