

## Proxies and Proxy Sites - What and Why?

Though a common term in the computer age today, it needn't bring out doubt in users. We all know what a proxy is, something that's used instead of the real thing, especially when it comes to dubious deals where you send a proxy to carry out an intended act instead of the real person. Similarly in the world of servers, proxy servers are fast gaining popularity. A closed proxy can be accessed by limited people and permits using someone else's computer to conceal your identity and/or location. An open proxy refers to a proxy server that can be accessed by anyone who uses the Internet. By and large, a proxy server permits users in a particular network group to accumulate and further internet services such as DNS or web pages. Consequently their bandwidth usage is lessened and controlled. In case of any open proxy, however, every user on the Internet can avail of this forwarding service. The open proxies, also known as anonymous open proxies, allow users to hide their true IP address from the service they access. In fact the use of proxies has at times been intended to abuse or disrupt a service. This obviously includes breaking its terms of service or the law. For such reasons open proxies have been viewed as problematic from time to time. They have been under severe scrutiny because school children, as well as office staff have been known to use it time and again to access restricted sites during work hours. The use of proxies can work to your advantage as it ensures that no one can take advantage of you in this visual world. This is very true in reference to users who use social forums on a daily basis. Users may be getting onto such sites to gain knowledge, learn about latest developments or also increase their social networking base, but there are always those who are on the prowl to find the vulnerable and easy targets. And just incase you're targeted your life could be a mess. Your credit card accounts could be tampered with, someone would know all your details and you could be stalked or black mailed and worse still you'd find yourself visiting sites and forums which you never have. You could even be made the next porn star. For your identity to be protected and enhancement of online security, the use of proxies works just fine. This permits you to access facebook, hotmail, youtube, and others without a worry. These may be popular as fun sites, but they also promote educational needs, helping you learn along the way or even have a secure social networking group you can depend on. Along the way you can make alliances that can assist you in getting a job, help make business or even make a friend. The opportunities are endless, as long as you keep yourself safe from prowlers. A computer can be run on an open proxy server without the owner knowing this. This is possible because of misconfiguration of proxy software used in a particular computer. Malware, viruses, trojans or worms are all used for this purpose. Open proxies are slow, as slow as 14400 baud (14.4 kbit/s), or even below 300 baud. At times they could keep alternating between fast to slow every minute. PlanetLab proxies are quicker and were deliberately put in place for public use. Despite the popularity of proxies, because of the controversies surrounding them, there are systems in place that don't permit their usage everywhere. IRC networks routinely test client systems for identified open proxy types. Mail servers can be configured to routinely check mail senders for proxies with the help of proxycheck software. Mail servers can also consult various DNSBL servers that block spam. Such servers also list open proxies and help in blocking them. Nevertheless, anonymous open proxies have also been hailed because they enhance ambiguity, in other words security when browsing the web or engaging in other internet services. The use of proxies conceals any users' true IP address. This is a boon because your IP address can be used against you. It can help miscreants construe information about any user and accordingly hack into his/her computer. Open proxies are being looked upon as the next big thing when it comes to dodge efforts at Internet censorship by governments and concerned organizations. There are various web sites that make available updated lists of open proxies on an ongoing basis.

## About the Author

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