
e-Mail Spam

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What you can do

- **8 Ways to Block Spam**
 - **6 Mistakes to Avoid**
 - **How to Trace Spam**
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8 Ways to Block Spam

- Don't buy anything promoted in a spam. Even if the offer isn't a scam, you are helping to finance spam.
- If your e-Mail program has a "preview pane," disable it to prevent the spam from reporting to its sender that you've received it.
- Use one e-Mail address for family and friends, another for everyone else. Or pick up a free one from Hotmail, Yahoo!, or a disposable forwarding-address service like www.SpamMotel.com. When an address attracts too much spam, abandon it for a new one.
- Use a provider that filters e-Mail, such as AOL, Earthlink, or MSN. If you get lots of spam, your ISP may not be filtering effectively. Find out its filtering features and compare them with competitors'.
- Report spam to your ISP. To help the FTC control spam, forward it to uce@ftc.gov. ("uce" stands for unsolicited commercial e-Mail).
- If you receive a spam that promotes a brand, complain to the company behind the brand by postal mail, which makes more of a statement than e-Mail.
- If your e-Mail program offers "rules" or "filters," use one to spot messages whose header contains one or more of these terms: html, text/html, multipart/alternative, or multipart/mixed. This can catch most spam, but may also catch most of the legitimate e-Mails that are formatted to look like a Web page.
- Install a firewall if you have broadband so a spammer can't plant software on your computer to turn it into a spamming machine. An unsecured computer can be especially attractive to spammers.

6 Mistakes to Avoid

- Posting your e-Mail address on a public Web page, such as eBay. If you must post it, you can thwart spammers' harvesting software by using "janedoe at isp.com," not "janedoe@isp.com." Or display your address as a graphic image, not text.
- Using your regular e-Mail address in a chat room. Instead, use a different screen name. If it attracts too much spam, discard it.
- Using an easy-to-guess e-Mail address like "JimSmith@isp.com." Instead, choose a harder-to-guess one with embedded digits, such as "Jim8mith2@isp.com."
- Clicking on an e-Mail's "unsubscribe" link. That informs the sender you're there. Don't do it unless you trust the sender.
- Disclosing your address to a site without checking its privacy policy. And don't forget to uncheck "check boxes" that grant the site or its partners permission to send you anything

nonessential.

- Forwarding chain letters, petitions, or virus warnings. All could be a spammer's ploy to collect addresses.

How to Trace Spam

- Check for a valid return address. This risks giving away your own address to the spammer. But if you're willing to take that risk, reply to the spam. You'll either receive an e-Mail that says your reply bounced, in which case the return address was probably forged, or you won't receive such an error message, in which case the e-Mail address was valid. (But if it is valid, you've also let the sender know that your e-Mail address is valid, too.)
- Trace an e-Mail address. You can often find out more about who owns an e-Mail address by performing a "Whois" query on its domain, the part of the address that follows the @ symbol. You can perform such a query at www.network-tools.com or by clicking the Whois link at www.networksolutions.com. You can also use those sites to find the owner of a Web site by entering the site's domain, the part that follows www. Unfortunately, domain owners don't always provide full and accurate information in these directories.
- View an e-Mail's programming code. If your e-Mail program lets you do this, it can provide vital information for tracing an e-Mail formatted to look like a Web page. In Microsoft Outlook, open the e-Mail (offline, if you don't want to notify the sender). Placing the cursor anywhere in the message body, right-click, and select View Source.
- Dig deeper. If you're familiar with such Internet terminology as DNS and IP address, you may be able to track down a spammer's computer and Internet provider using online "detective" tools at www.sampade.org.