Spam: Not Just Chemically-Processed Canned “Ham” Anymore!

Fight Back Against Spam

By Jennifer Gross

"Spam" is the Internet equivalent of junk mail. From get-rich-quick schemes to ads for online pornography, if you've got an email account, you've probably had it show up in your inbox. Attorney David Kramer is waging a legal crusade against spammers-- the unscrupulous Internet marketers who send out mass junk email. Spam's more than just an annoyance. "The costs to the Internet community are staggering," says Kramer. When spam clogs your inbox, it costs you time and money to sort junk mail from important messages. And it costs Internet service providers and other businesses money. ISPs like CompuServe and AOL spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and man hours trying to keep Internet junk mail from landing in your account.

So what's being done about spam?

David Kramer and the Internet service providers have taken on spammers in court, and won. There's also state legislation on the table that, if approved, would allow ISPs to fine anyone using their services against company policy to transmit mass email.
What can you do about spam?
There's no surefire way to make sure your mailbox stays spam-free, but there are steps you can take to stem the tide.
Avoid newsgroups. Spammers use automated programs called bots to snatch up your email address from newsgroup postings. If you want to use the newsgroups without junk-mail repercussions, Troy Brophy of the Help Channel has advice on changing your email address to foil the spammers.
Set up filters in your email client to eliminate most unwanted messages. The **FamilyPC** tutorial tells you how to do it.
If the email client you've got isn't doing the trick, you can download an anti-spam program.
Even if you follow these suggestions, spammers are crafty. Chances are that some junk email is still going to find its way to your inbox.

Email Filter Tips:
What's a Filter?
A filter is a rule for your email software to follow. Filters tell your email software where to put certain types of messages. For example, a filter can send certain messages straight to the garbage, and other, more important messages to a special folder.

Why Do I Need a Filter?
Combined with folders, filters can help you get organized and save time. A few uses for filters include:

- Separating business and personal emails
- Putting newsletters you receive regularly (like Internet for Beginners) in a special folder for when you have time to read them carefully
- Singling out email from particular people, such as your spouse, children or friends

- Sending spam and pornography straight to the garbage

How do you set up folders and filters in your email program? Simple! Just follow these three steps:

Step One: Make a Plan

Take a look at your inbox to see what types of messages you regularly receive. Do you have a lot of business and personal emails mixed together? Consider creating a separate "Business" folder for emails from your boss or coworkers. Do you receive a lot of regular email newsletters? Consider setting up a folder for them. On a piece of paper, jot down the folders that would help you get organized.

Step Two: Create Your Folders

Divide your email inbox into the folders you've decided on.

Step Three: Create Your Filters

Now, create filters to send your emails to the appropriate folder. Once you've set up the filters, your messages will automatically be sent to the correct folder every time you check your email. Not bad, right?

Not sure how to create a folder or make filters? Here are step-by-step instructions for the most popular email programs: (see www.about.com Setting Up Email Filters)

Reporting Spam

You've got mail! Only thing is, it isn't from someone you know, it is from a stranger trying to sell you something, or worse yet, trying to get you to view pornography. How frustrating! Sometimes, hitting the delete key just isn't enough. Take action and get them to stop!

First of all, don't reply to them, even if they offer you a way to unsubscribe. This will verify that the address is a good one. There are other ways to deal with them.

One step you can take is to block that sender. If you are using Outlook Express 5.0, you can just select Messages, then block sender. To see if you can block senders from your email program, go to the help sections and search for block sender. Don't be surprised though if you receive the same email again, only from a different address.

Report them to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). ISP's don't like spam as much as you do! Spam will bog down their servers and they may even have to spend more money to keep their service up to par because of a lot of spam. Most ISP's offer a place to report spam. Check with your ISP to find out how to report the spam to them.

Take matters in your own hands and call a cop, Spam Cop www.spamcop.net, that is. They can help you track down the actual sender by viewing the header information in the email. Even if the spammer, used a Web based email, like Hotmail, most of the time, you can still locate what ISP they were using by information in the header. ISPs do not like their servers being used by spammers to send spam, so they will cancel the account of a habitual offender.

You will have to get the complete header information before you can report it to Spam Cop. They offer easy to use directions for several different email clients. Most of the time, hitting the delete key to a spam can be satisfying, but at least you can take action if you are wearing out your delete key!