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SPAM Problems?

SPAM

If you're like most people, you've experienced a dramatic increase in "SPAM" (not the gelatinous meat-like goo that oozes out of a can) -- that Unsolicited Commercial E-mail (UCE) you get in your e-mail. You are not alone, almost everyone is receiving these usually undesired messages.

What you can do to reduce SPAM in your mail

Don't click on the links in the SPAM message - just delete the message. Most of the links contained in these messages are designed to transmit a serial number back to the spammer so that they'll know that your e-mail mailbox is "live" and being accessed. The spammer then sells your e-mail address to other spammers as a "premium active" address! You'll start getting even more SPAM!

Don't click the "unsubscribe" link at the end of the message, if it contains one. While some have reported positive results by doing so, in general, it only gets you off of ONE copy of whatever mailing list at ONE spammer (if they honor your removal request at all), and at worst, an unscrupulous spammer will now know that your e-mail mailbox is "live" and being accessed, and may then sell your e-mail address to other spammers as a "premium active" address, and you'll start getting even more SPAM!

Don't REPLY to messages from SPAMMers angrily demanding to be removed from their list -- it only confirms to them that your address is active, and you may start getting even more SPAM! Besides, SPAM rarely comes from the same place twice -- the SPAMMers routinely change their "site" so that if you follow their "unsubscribe" instructions, they can claim to have removed you from that list, but they'll just pop up with a different address and list, with you still on it. And, they'll sell your "premium active" e-mail address to other SPAMMers!

Avoid providing your e-mail address to "free" services on the Internet. Many of these "free" sites make a portion of their income collecting and selling e-mail addresses to SPAMMers! If you MUST have access to such a site, consider obtaining a separate, free e-mail account at a site such as Yahoo! or Hotmail just for such use. Then you can just log into that account once in a while and mass delete all of the messages in it, as all the resulting SPAM will go there instead of to your UNI mailbox.

Avoid publishing your e-mail address on your web page. There are numerous "robot" programs available on the Internet that automatically travel through all web sites on the Internet (much like a search engine) and "harvest" e-mail addresses they find on web pages!

Avoid providing or stating your e-mail address in chat rooms. Consider using a separate Yahoo! or Hotmail account for such purposes if you must.

Don't provide your e-mail address on product warranty cards, etc. Do you really want the toaster oven company to start sending you messages about their latest electric can openers?

If you are using MailMan in your dorm room - consider using a full e-mail program, like Mozilla Thunderbird or

Messenger Mail, MS-Outlook, Eudora, etc., many of which have filtering capabilities that you can set up to automatically send junk mail to the wastebasket folder. Instructions for configuring Mozilla Thunderbird or Messenger is available here:

[Installing Mozilla Thunderbird or Messenger E-mail program on your computer](#) [1]

Consider trying one of the many anti-spam products, some of which are freeware. (These require that you use a "full" e-mail program, such as those described above -- they don't work with MailMan.) The University of Northern Iowa does not promote nor endorse any of the following, but here are some you might want to try out:

- <http://www.cexx.org> [2]
- <http://www.mailwasher.net> [2]
- <http://www.webattack.com/freeware/comm/fwspam.shtml> [2]
- <http://www.mcafee.com/myapps/msk> [2]
- <http://www.spambutcher.com> [2]
- <http://www.inboxprotector.com> [2]
- <http://www.giantcompany.com> [2]
- <http://www.familycow.com/inboxdoctor.html> [2]

What if I WANT to receive SPAM?

If you *want* to receive SPAM, and our e-mail system is filtering it out, get a free e-mail account at Yahoo! or Hotmail for this.

About SPAM

Sometimes it seems that as much as half (and often more) of the e-mail you receive is "junk" - advertisements from people you don't know trying to sell you something you don't want. The practice of sending UCE, or "SPAMming", has become a cottage industry on the Internet. There are "get-rich-quick" schemes promising people that if they just pay some sum of money for "millions of verified active e-mail addresses", they can sit back and mass-mail a message to millions of people in hopes that some percentage of them will click on a link in their message, guaranteeing them "easy money." There are large mass-marketing SPAMmers whose sole business is to send millions of messages, expecting only a fraction of a percent of the recipients to respond - but enough to make a profit. SPAMmers don't care if only a fraction of a percentage of the recipients actually respond -- they'll happily annoy millions of us just to get a thousand responses. Unfortunately, this is relatively inexpensive to do, compared to sending paper advertisements via postal mail, and thousands are doing it. Some estimates are that SPAM now accounts for one third to one half of all Internet e-mail, costing people time, and businesses and e-mail providers (including UNI) uncalculated amounts of money in the form of server storage space, Internet link capacity, and lost productivity.

Businesses and universities, including the University of Northern Iowa, are using various means to cope with and reduce the amount of SPAM that is delivered to peoples' mailboxes. These measures range from filters, as used at UNI, to real-time black hole lists, and commercial anti-spam appliances that more aggressively attempt to block SPAM. None of these methods is 100% effective, and if the measures are too "aggressive", they may also stop legitimate messages.

Unfortunately, machines cannot yet "read" an e-mail message or "view" a photo and accurately discern whether or not a message would be considered SPAM by its intended recipient.

When you receive a SPAM message, it is usually best to simply ignore it and delete it. It is generally not a good idea to click on any part of the message, or follow any web link. Keep the following points in mind:

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Nothing is free. No matter what the message says, there is always a catch. There is no such thing as free music, movies, clothing, or porn. Nobody is going to spend money to buy your e-mail address and send you a message in order to give you something at a loss.

- You are not the only one with that "exclusive" unique prize claim number. Everybody on our e-mail system got that same "special" claim number!
- Nothing in a bottle will safely make any part of your anatomy, male or female, larger or more attractive to the opposite sex.
- You are no more "pre-approved" for that credit card than anyone else - we're all pre-approved for that card with the low "teaser" interest rate that shoots up to a ridiculous rate shortly after we receive it.

How did they get your e-mail address? They probably bought it from someone else. There are numerous "companies" who scan the Internet looking for actively used e-mail accounts.

- They pay people some amount of money for each working e-mail address they find and submit.
- They buy and consolidate various lists of addresses.
- They write "robot" programs which "surf" the Internet, looking for and collecting "mailto" links on peoples' web pages.
- They buy addresses from sites which ask you to volunteer your e-mail address. Sign up for "free joke-of-the-day" -- get added to a list. Sign up for "free porn" -- get added to a list.
- They monitor chat rooms.

They simply try every likely name followed by many common e-mail sites, for example: jdoe@hotmail.com, jdoe@yahoomail.com, jdoe@uni.edu, jdoe@aol.com, etc. Then they watch for which messages DON'T bounce back with "address unknown" messages, adding those to a list.

Source URL: <http://www.uni.edu/its/support/article/573>

Links:

[1] <http://www.uni.edu/its/us/document/unimail/mozilla/>

[2] <http://www.uni.edu/its/us/faqs/email/SPAM/aboutSPAM.htm>