

Sick of spam? So are we. But what is it?

Spam is any kind of unwanted online communication. The most common form of spam is unwanted email. Email spam targets individual users with direct mail messages. Email spam lists are often created by scanning Usenet postings, stealing Internet mailing lists, or searching the Web for addresses. Email spams typically cost users money out-of-pocket to receive. Many people - anyone with measured phone service - read or receive their mail while the meter is running, so to speak. Spam costs them additional money. On top of that, it costs money for ISPs and online services to transmit spam, and these costs are transmitted directly to subscribers.

To protect yourself against email spam, be sure to do the following things:

1. Use email software with built-in spam filtering. The spam-filter will go through all the emails you receive and sort out all the unwanted ones before they reach your email program's Inbox.
2. Look closely at any email message before opening it. Do you recognize the name? If not, it is likely spam. Also look at the time that the e-mail was sent. Most spam is sent between 12 a.m. and 4 a.m. If you are still not sure, click on the message. Clicking on the message will not harm anything, but if there is a link, do not click it.
3. Stop posting your e-mail address on a public forum or website. It is estimated that 95% of all junk e-mail is caused by a person publicly disclosing his or her e-mail address. There are many robots and scripts that automatically scan websites for e-mail addresses.