

Protecting Wisconsin Consumers for 75 Years

## Spam...it's junk e-mail



**Internet users received an average of 1,470 Internet spam messages in 2001, and now can expect about 3,800 annually.**

**What is spam?** It's annoying commercial electronic mail messages sent, often in bulk, to consumers without the consumer's prior request or consent. The goal of spam is to catch your eye.

Often spam is promoting get rich quick schemes and questionable products. Common e-mail scams are chain letters, work at home schemes, weight loss potions, credit repair offers, advance fee loan scams, vacation offers, and adult entertainment.

Unsolicited e-mail with graphic sexual content is a problem, too. Surveys show that nearly one-third of unsolicited e-mail now involves pornographic material.

**Why do I get spam?** For the same reason you get junk mail through the Postal Service—people are trying to sell you things. E-mail is cheaper to send, so you get even more of it! Spam mailing lists are created in a variety of ways, including scanning discussion groups,

buying or stealing Internet mailing lists, searching the Web for addresses, and even just guessing e-mail addresses at random. If you use e-mail, chances are you're going to get spam.

**Is it spam?** If you asked for it, it's not spam. For example, if you opted to receive special messages from Amazon.com, then you cannot complain about Amazon sending you e-mails.

Friends don't usually send spam. What if a friend forwards e-mail and asks you to send it to 10 other people? If you know the person, it is best to tell them you do not want spam.

### Spam fighting tips

**Get a spam filter.** Many Internet Service Providers (ISP's) now come with a spam filter. You can also purchase one or download one for free. However, the best filters still let some spam through.

**Never reply directly to spam.**

A reply, even requesting to be deleted or removed from a mailing list, verifies to the spammer that your e-mail address is active. You may end up getting even more spam.

**Do not open your spam.** Some spam messages are programmed to notify the sender when the e-mail has been opened. Then, spammers know your e-mail address is valid and active.

*Delete spam without opening it.*

**Do not post your e-mail address** on a website or in a newsgroup. Spammers use e-mail robots called mailbots to collect addresses from newsgroups and the Web.

**Confuse spammers** by using two e-mail accounts. Give your primary account to friends, family, and colleagues. Use the other account (such as Hotmail or Yahoo which are free) for mailing lists, shopping, newsgroups, or Web forms.

(over)

**Check a website's privacy policy** before giving your e-mail address. Most often you can find a link to the company's privacy policy, which is usually located at the bottom of the web page. If you are still confused about their policy, e-mail and ask:

- How does the company use the information you share with them?
- How do they protect children's privacy?
- Do they share information with a third party?
- How do I access the information to change or delete it from the company's database?
- How do I remove my information from e-mail, phone, and postal mailing lists?

**Screen spam.** You can program your e-mail to filter out messages that have subject lines in all caps, a dollar sign or exclamation points, words like "unsubscribe," "X-priority," "adv," "bulk e-mail," "authenticated sender," or "make money fast" in subject lines.

**Be skeptical of commercial e-mail.** Don't believe promises from strangers. Greet money making opportunities with skepticism. Most of the time, these are old scams delivered through the newest technology.

**Check out** [www.dmaconsumers.org](http://www.dmaconsumers.org). This site allows you to "opt out" of national e-mail lists, which will limit the amount of unsolicited e-mails you receive.

## Complain about spam

Send a copy of the unwanted or deceptive message to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [spam@uce.gov](mailto:spam@uce.gov). The FTC pursues law enforcement actions against people who send deceptive spam.

When you complain, it's important to include the full e-mail header. The information in the header makes it possible for consumer protection agencies to follow up on your complaint.

### Finding the header

- Outlook and Outlook Express
  - Click *File*
  - Choose *Properties*
  - Select the *Details* Tab
- Outlook 98
  - Click *View* menu
  - Select *Options*
  - *Extended* headers will be under *Internet Headers*.
- Netscape Mail
  - Click *View*
  - Choose *Headers*
  - Select *All*
- Eudora
  - Click *Tools*
  - Choose *Options*
  - Select *Fonts and Display*
  - Make sure the *Headers* box is checked.

**Send a copy of the spam** to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). Often the e-mail address is [abuse@yourispname.com](mailto:abuse@yourispname.com) or [postmaster@yourispname.com](mailto:postmaster@yourispname.com)

This lets them know about the spam problem and helps them to stop it. Make sure to include a copy of the spam, along with the

full e-mail header. At the top of the message, state that you're complaining about being spammed.

You also may want to complain to the sender's ISP because most ISP's want to cut off spammers who abuse their system.

Or you can go to [SpamCop.net](http://SpamCop.net). This website offers a free spam-reporting service that will automatically detect the illegitimate headers and send a form complaint to the proper authorities.

## More help

To learn more about or get help fighting spam, check the following websites.

Federal Trade Commission:  
[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

Direct Marketing Association:  
[www.dmaconsumers.org](http://www.dmaconsumers.org)

For information on current spam laws within the United States:  
[www.spamlaws.com](http://www.spamlaws.com)

For more information or to file a complaint contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

**1-800-422-7128**

**EMAIL:**  
[datcphonenumber@datcp.state.wi.us](mailto:datcphonenumber@datcp.state.wi.us)

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.datcp.state.wi.us](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us)

**FAX: (608)224-4939**

**TTY: (608)224-5058**