
Nine Spam Fighting Tips

Not many words will make email users see red like “spam”. Spam has no friends, manners, or boundaries and takes no prisoners. It has made email users slam their keyboards and mice, pull their hair, and wear out the delete keys and fingers everywhere. Spam fighting software has become an enormous business and has saved many companies and individuals countless man hours and money. Due to the “nature of the beast”, however, some spam still finds its way into most email inboxes on a daily basis. Although it is nearly impossible to stop spam altogether, short of not using email at all, there are some methods that email users can employ to help alleviate the spam burden on their inboxes.

1) Avoid replying to sender. When you reply and type REMOVE in the subject line, this is a great way to let spammers know that yes, your e-mail address is up, running, and being used right now. It's like waving a white flag that says, "I read unsolicited e-mail. Please send more." The best way to "opt out" of a spammer's mailing list is to pretend you never received the e-mail message. Just be sure to keep any expletives to a whisper while deleting the message.

2) Avoid using an automated “Out of Office” reply when possible. Using an automated “Out of Office” reply is great for letting everyone know that you are unavailable at the time. Unfortunately, it also confirms your email address to spammers while you are away. If you will only be away from your desk for a short period of time, avoid using an automated response. Utilizing a spam filter that filters spam BEFORE it hits your inbox rather than AS it hits your inbox will also help to prevent an automated reply from confirming your address.

3) Alter your email address when you post it. You might post your e-mail address sometimes to a newsgroup, chat room, or bulletin board. But you don't have to post it correctly. You can “munge” it by adding a character, number, or symbol (or two) that has to be taken out for your address to work (for example, "dduck@d1sney.c0m"). It really throws those email address harvesters roaming the Internet off balance. It also helps you feel as though you're doing your part at “getting back at spam” by filling spammer databases with bad addresses.

4) Don't give out your primary email address. Create a "disposable" Web e-mail address (such as a Hotmail, Yahoo, or Google Mail address) that you can give when registering for free software or shareware, or even when ordering from a company online. Save your primary address for friends, family, coworkers, and clients. Then use another one when ordering online or creating a website account.

5) **Make use of laws against spam.** The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 was approved by the Senate in November 2003 and by the House of Representatives in December 2003, and was signed into law by President Bush on December 16, 2003. Although it is currently far from perfect, every little bit helps. For more information about spam laws that have been enacted and those still waiting around patiently, visit the [Spam Laws](#) Web site.

6) **Don't post your email address on your Web page.** Refer to #3 and "get back at spam".

7) **Review the privacy policies on Web sites.** Everyone is an Internet expert and can blaze through those online forms at lightning speed. But slow down and make sure that you're checking all the privacy options you need to check. Sometimes these are hard to find, but they're there. And sometimes there is more than one box to check. Some sites assume the right to share your information; responsible sites will give you a way to opt out.

8) **Don't list yourself in Internet directories.** This is a tough one. If you're in the regular phone book, chances are you're in one of the big directories such as BigFoot, AnyWho, InfoSpace, Switchboard, and Yahoo. Look yourself up, and there you'll be. There is probably a place to add your e-mail address (for free, can you believe it?), but my advice is: Don't. Also be sure to "Google" yourself and remove your email address from any profiles you may have, such as those used by Yahoo, MSN, and AOL.

9) **Do not forward chain email.** Maybe this should be placed toward the top of the list. This is my favorite one, and I'm pretty sure I've lost some friends after telling them to cease and desist. Most are hoaxes. Don't forward them to friends. An example of one many email users have seen is:

My name is Bill Gates, and I need your help...

It's a pretty good bet that if you don't know Bill Gates, he won't be sending you any sort of email, because chances are he doesn't need your help. Some others I've received concern needles in theater seats, free software from my boss, free cases of champagne, free trips to Disney World, a request for money for a little girl dying of a tropical disease, the Hawaiian good luck totem, caution using cell phones at gas stations, and my personal favorite: a virus warning about e-mail messages with "How to give a cat a colonic" in the subject line. If it seems too good to be true or too far-fetched, chances are your gut instinct is right.

About Desktop Resources, Inc.

Desktop Resources, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Tony Schafer, and is a leader in helping organizations couple their business initiatives with the technology to address those needs. DRI's "InformIT" managed services offerings proactively manage client infrastructure and strive to prevent problems before they occur. For more details, contact DRI at (317) 596-3650 or <http://www.DesktopResources.com>