

Tip 5

Minimise spam

Spam is the Internet equivalent of junk mail in your letter box.

Spam emails are commercial electronic messages that have been sent to you without your consent. Senders often attempt to buy, sell or advertise goods, services, land, investment opportunities and so on through spam. Spam not only clogs up your inbox with annoying, unwanted messages, but also creates a time cost to you in deleting them, and if the problem is particularly bad, there are increased download costs. As well, spam can often contain viruses, worms and trojans.

Software is available to help reduce the inflow of spam. It detects unsolicited and unwanted emails and prevents them from reaching your inbox by searching for suspicious word patterns or other clues that may indicate spam. The filtering software then diverts these messages to (in some cases) a special mail box or location so that you can check through them later and delete those that are spam.

What to do

It is not possible to completely stop spam from entering your email box, however, it is possible to take steps to prevent a large amount of spam:

- install spam filters to stop spam emails getting to your inbox
- when you receive spam, add the address to 'junk senders' - most mail programs have the ability to block senders, or add them to a 'junk senders' list
- do not respond to unsolicited mail
- if the source of an email appears dubious, do not use the 'remove' or 'unsubscribe' link. (These links can be used to confirm that an email account is active, and can lead to even more spam being sent)
- do not open attachments in messages if the source of the message is unknown or is suspicious
- report spam to the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) at: www.aca.gov.au

Further information

Spam legislation

The Australian Government is concerned about the growth of spam and has implemented the Spam Act 2003 as one part of its approach to combating the widespread problem of spam. The Act is available at the Scaleplus website: <http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pasteact/3/3628/top.html>

A guide to the Spam Act 2003 specifically designed for small business is available at: www.dcita.gov.au/spam

Consumer and business guides

The Australian Communications Authority (ACA) is the government agency responsible for enforcing Australia's Spam Act. The ACA provides online information and downloadable guides on the many things you can do to reduce the amount of spam you receive, as well as advice on compliance with the Act: www.aca.gov.au