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Tips for Slamming Spam

By Laura Bray

Communication News, September 2002

Does anyone out there honestly appreciate receiving spam, or unsolicited junk e-mail? Here are seven tips for keeping the spam slingers at bay.

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1. Create a "spam-only" e-mail account.

Open a free e-mail account (Yahoo! or Hotmail, for example). Use this e-mail account whenever a vendor requests your e-mail address, or when posting messages to public places such as listservers and discussion groups. Provide your primary e-mail address only to your customers, employees, and business associates.

When you create this "spam-only" account, use an unusual combination of letters and numbers ("frog223@yahoo.com," not "michael@yahoo.com"). This makes it more difficult for spammers to randomly generate your e-mail address.

2. Use caution when posting your e-mail address to a public place.

Web sites, discussion groups, and listservers are public places, open to anyone who wants to review them. Posting an e-mail to these places (especially if they include "Click here to e-mail" links) makes your address available to *scavenger bots*--programs that harvest e-mail addresses for list brokers). Use your "spam-only" address. If

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that's not possible, minimize the public use of your main e-mail address.

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3. **Use filters.**

Use the filtering feature in your e-mail client to direct mail to a "potential junk mail" box, which will block future e-mail from those senders. Some e-mail programs are capable of blocking e-mail from known spammers.

4. **Pass on directories.**

If your online service has a directory, opt out of it, or delete your profile. These directories are gold mines for spammers.

5. **Never, ever reply.**

Don't give in to the temptation to "Click this link to unsubscribe from our list." This simply confirms the validity of your address to the spammer, and you'll be on the list for good.

6. **Read those privacy statements.**

When you shop online or subscribe to online newsletters, seek out information regarding whether the vendor will share your e-mail address. Most reputable online providers will allow you to check a box (or perhaps uncheck it) if you do not want your address shared with other vendors. Can't find it? Then reconsider shopping there or subscribing to the list.

7. **Report fraud.**

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) recently announced a crackdown on deceptive email schemes. If you receive this type of spam, report it immediately.

For more information on blocking spam, check out the following Web sites:

- [Earthlink](#)
- [Junkbusters](#)
- [Fight Spam on the Internet](#)

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