

Unsolicited Email Guide

Prepared by [Asadoorian Consulting](#)

Email is a vital tool that just about everyone with Internet access uses everyday. Email is a feature provided by your Internet Service Provider when you sign-up for Internet service, given by work for communication, and also available for free through companies such as Microsoft ([Hotmail](#)), Google ([Gmail](#)) and Yahoo ([Yahoo Mail](#)). With the global proliferation of email into everyday lives, an unfortunate downside has cropped up. This downside is known as spam. The term spam refers to unsolicited or junk email that is received in the inbox. On some networks, more spam emails are received than wanted emails. Personal inboxes can receive anywhere from 5 to 250 spam emails a day. The issue of spam is a large one and the costs associated with stopping and investigating spam are also something that affect both your employer and your Internet Service Provider. This guide provides information on steps email users can take to reduce the likelihood of receiving spam and what a user can do if they receive spam.

Avoiding Spam

In order to receive spam emails, the sender must have your email address. So the most important step involves not giving out your personal/work email address to sites or people you don't know. For instance, when signing up for a free website (which offers games, information, product promotions, etc.) almost all such sites ask for an email address. Be sure to read the fine print before providing an email address because often times your email address will be used and possibly resold to marketers who specialize in maintaining a database of valid email addresses. Spammers then buy such email lists and proceed to send millions of unwanted spam emails. Another common way of ending up on a spammer's list is by posting your email address on the Internet. This normally happens through one of two ways. Some Internet users maintain personal websites with family or hobby information. Within this personal website contact information such as an email address is also present so that others who view the website can contact the author/creator. The second way in which a personal email address ends up on the Internet is through online forum postings. Sometimes in a forum post (as part of a conversation) a user may post their email address so that someone else can contact them. The reality is that if an email address appears on the Internet, automated software which scans the Internet for email address will eventually find the email address which will then be sold to marketers seeking email addresses.

Also keep in mind that spammers sell email address lists to each other once they verify the validity of an email. One of the easiest ways spammers use to verify your address is by providing a link in the spam email to click on in order to unsubscribe. Although such links are required by federal law, *Asadoorian Consulting* generally recommends against clicking on them. By clicking on the link and filling out a form to unsubscribe, the spammers are able to verify that the

email address is active and valid. The only time when we feel it to be ok to click on a link to unsubscribe is when the email is coming from a mailing list of a Fortune 500 company. For instance, you are receiving emails from a well known airline carrier with the latest fare sales. Such emails can generally be trusted and therefore the unsubscribe link can be used.

A strategy email users can utilize to reduce spam email in their inboxes is the use of a second email address. As previously stated, various free email services exist that email users can obtain an email address from. *Asadoorian Consulting* recommends to our customers they create one such account and only give that email address out publicly (for Internet posts, sign-up forms, websites, etc.). Using this strategy allows you to communicate with the worldwide public while keeping your personal inbox clear of spam. If spam is to be received, it will go to the free email account. Finally, a new free email account can be created periodically if the spam levels increase significantly.

What to Do If You Are Receiving Spam

Generally speaking, employers and Internet Service Providers filter out a large majority of spam before it reaches an inbox (also known as server-side filtering). Chances are that an overly cautious person will still receive some spam. Once spam makes it to your inbox, the best step to take is to filter it out so that similar spam messages do not appear in the inbox. *Asadoorian Consulting* focuses on two forms of filtering for its clients because they work very well and are extremely easy to implement. The first form of filtering we recommend is something your email client probably already does. For instance, [Microsoft Outlook 2003](#) and [Mozilla Thunderbird](#) (free) have filtering capabilities built into them that allow these mail clients to catch a majority of spam without any end user intervention. The messages they catch/filter are placed in a special inbox folder (usually called *junk email*) which allows the end user to review the messages before permanently deleting them. If the built in spam filtering capabilities of your email client along with the filtering done by your Internet Service Provider do not help, a 3rd party spam filtering tool will be needed. Through years of experience and feedback, *Asadoorian Consulting* recommends [Cloudmark Desktop](#). This product has a yearly subscription cost, but our experience has shown the effectiveness of this product to greatly outweigh the cost. The spam filters used by Cloudmark Desktop constantly learn/update from a community of over 1 million users. Please contact us for more information or specific details.

One step you can also take if you are receiving spam is to let the federal government know. With feedback such as yours, the government is able to trace these spam emails and find/prosecute the originators. The FTC's consumer complaint database takes submissions from the public. Forward all spam emails to spam@uce.gov.

What the Government is Doing About Spam

The federal government passed the CAN-SPAM Act which became effective January 1, 2004. This law placed certain requirements on commercial email and also established penalties for those in violation of the law. For a brief summary of the law, please click [here](#). Various states have also enacted laws against spam, but it does vary between states. For specific information, please contact *Asadoorian Consulting* or your state legislature.

More Information

- Federal Trade Commission's information about spam: <http://www.ftc.gov/spam/>
- Information and resources from Microsoft about spam: <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/email/fightspam.mspx>

About *Asadoorian Consulting*

Asadoorian Consulting, founded in 2001, provides computer and information technology services to both home users and small offices. All services are provided on-site to reduce the inconvenience and disruption associated with taking computers to a shop. The technical background of *Asadoorian Consulting* includes work for Fortune 500 companies and mission-critical government computers. Our enterprise level experience and Microsoft certifications enable individual users and small offices to avail themselves of services equivalent to those of a highly skilled and dedicated information technology staff without having to pay for such staff on a full-time basis.

For any questions, please don't hesitate to contact *Asadoorian Consulting*:

- Phone: 818-636-7360
- Email: info@mike5.com
- Website: www.mike5.com