



Protecting yourself from spam

There are a number of ways you can protect your mobile phone number, email address, and computer from receiving unsolicited commercial electronic messages or spam.

Protect your mobile phone number

Unwanted SMS or text messages can be particularly annoying. Exercise caution when disclosing your mobile phone number and look for options, such as tick boxes, that allow you to 'opt-out' of receiving commercial messages or marketing material.

Protect your email address when online

Spammers automatically collect (or 'harvest') email addresses from the internet. Your email address can be harvested when you list it on a website, register a domain name, post a message to a mailing list, or contribute to an internet chat room.

Avoid giving out your email address where possible. If you must do so, look for options, such as tick boxes, that indicate you will not be sent further offers or information.

Check that the organisation does not pass your information on to other parties by reading through the terms and conditions, or privacy and consent policies.

Consider using separate email addresses for different purposes, such as a personal 'friends and family' email address. This will help you sort and prioritise your email.

Spammers also send out bulk emails to random addresses in the hope of hooking a genuine recipient. If you are spammed, you have several options:

- Do not respond if the message seems dubious
- If the source seems genuine, contact the business to make a complaint
- Make a complaint to ACMA.

Protect your details when providing information on your website

When posting your email address on your website, you have several options:

- Use a web-based form for site visitors. When a visitor submits the form you'll receive an email, and you can reply as if the person has emailed you directly. These forms defeat spammers' automated mailing systems.
- Write your email address so that it is harder to harvest. For example, post it as an image, rather

than text, or replace symbols with text, e.g. 'my-name at example dot com'.

- Provide a general landline number, rather than a mobile phone number. You can use an answering machine or service to provide your mobile contact details.

Use filters

A filter is a piece of software that sorts incoming email messages and blocks those it identifies as spam.

Filtering is very useful, but it is not perfect. Sometimes filters fail to identify spam or they mistakenly block a genuine, non-spam message. Adjusting the filter settings can help minimise these risks. Your Internet Service Provider may offer a free spam filtering service.

You can also choose to direct your spam into a 'spam folder', rather than automatically blocking it. This means you can periodically scan for genuine messages that your filter may have mistakenly identified as spam.

If you use web-based email, such as Hotmail or Yahoo, your provider may offer an anti-spam setting.

Do not become an 'accidental spammer'

If you do not have good security measures in place, spammers can take over your computer and use it to send spam to other people without your knowledge. To avoid becoming an accidental spammer, adopt these good security practices:

- Use anti-virus and personal firewall software and update it regularly.
- Download and install the latest security patches for your computer system.
- Use long and random passwords.
- If you do not know who sent an attachment, don't open it and delete it immediately.

Where can I find out more?

For more spam-related information, including frequently asked questions, complaint and enquiry online forms and to download SpamMATTERS software, visit the ACMA website at www.spam.acma.gov.au.

Please note: this document is intended as a guide only and while every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate at the time publication, it should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases.

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