

# Spam & scams: Your questions answered



## How do I know it's spam?

Spam is any electronic message that is commercial—something that offers, advertises or promotes goods or services. This could include products, real estate or investment opportunities. Because it's electronic, you can get spam on your mobile or on your computer.

Generally, if it's not commercial, it's not spam. So, messages like appointment reminders, fault notifications or service messages that don't have promotional or advertising content, are not considered spam and aren't covered by the Spam Act.

If you are concerned about messages sent via fax or telephone calls, find out more on [donotcall.gov.au](http://donotcall.gov.au).

## How can I stop getting spam?

There are a range of things you can do:

- > **know what you're signing up for**—check the fine print when signing up to a newsletter or entering a competition
- > **just say no**—ask to be removed from mailing lists, unsubscribe from emails and reply 'stop' to unwanted SMS
- > **report the rule breakers**—complaints about spam can be made at [acma.gov.au](http://acma.gov.au).

## I've received spam—what can I do?

When you receive an unwanted message, it could be:

- > a message sent by a legitimate business, that is not complying with Australia's spam laws, or
- > a scam—see the information over the page for how to spot ... and stop scams.

If you think the message is sent by a legitimate business, the quickest way to stop getting the spam is to unsubscribe or contact the business to ask them to stop sending you messages. You can also make a complaint or report the message at [acma.gov.au](http://acma.gov.au).

If you unsubscribe and messages don't stop, make a complaint about the business failing to action your unsubscribe request.

## Why do I get messages from politicians, charities or government when I haven't given my permission, or even if my number is on the Do Not Call Register?

Registered political parties, education institutions, registered charities and government bodies are exempt from some of Australia's spam laws. They can send you messages even without your permission, but they still need to include a name and contact details in any electronic message they send you.

## I've asked to stop getting messages, but they haven't stopped. What can I do?

If you continue to receive messages more than five days after asking them to stop, keep the messages and make a complaint to the ACMA.

It's helpful if you can provide details of when and who you tried to unsubscribe from, so keep the details.

## I am worried about my personal information being passed from one business to another. Where can I find information about privacy issues?

How your personal information is handled is regulated by the *Privacy Act 1988*. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner is responsible for regulation of the Privacy Act and has frequently asked questions on their website, [oaic.gov.au](http://oaic.gov.au), that may assist you.

## My mobile number is registered on the Do Not Call Register. Why do I still receive commercial SMS messages?

The Do Not Call Register — [donotcall.gov.au](http://donotcall.gov.au) — relates to telemarketing and fax marketing, not SMS.

SMS messages are covered by Australia's spam laws as they are electronic messages. You can make a complaint or report SMS spam to the ACMA.

## Spotting and stopping scams

The methods used by scammers are continually evolving and becoming more sophisticated.

Tips on common scams and fraud are available at [scamwatch.gov.au](http://scamwatch.gov.au), but here are some things to look out for ... and avoid:

- > **phishing emails** — these are sent from falsified or 'spoofed' email addresses and often claim to be from a bank, online retailer or credit card company. These emails direct recipients to a website that looks like the real website of a retailer or financial institution, where they're encouraged to reveal financial details such as credit card numbers, account names and passwords or other personal information
- > **'Nigerian' scams** — appear to come from overseas and ask you to send money in return for a large lump sum being transferred to your bank account
- > **work-at-home schemes, lottery wins and prizes** — require you to send money before claiming a reward
- > **pharmaceutical scams** — offer 'amazing' products that claim to boost your health or appearance
- > **technical support scam calls** — suggest that your computer has a virus and that the caller can protect your computer if you purchase their software.

### If you think the message may be a scam, here's what to do:

1. DON'T respond to it — report it and delete it. Don't download any images or files in the message

