Protecting your inbox from spam—Ignore it, report it, delete it!

What is spam?
Protecting yourself from spam is an important part of using email and the internet. Many people have received volumes of email messages from people they don’t know advertising miracle cures or informing them they have won millions in a lottery they never entered. Emails like this are known as spam.

As well as being an annoyance, spam can contain links to malicious software or fraudulent content that can cost consumers money, time and patience. The following information provides some advice on understanding and dealing with spam.

Use a spam filter
Ask your Internet Service Provider (ISP) about what they are doing to stop you from receiving spam. Many ISPs offer a free spam filtering service. Purchasing and installing spam-filtering software can provide further protection from spam.

Secure your computer
Without security measures in place, your internet connection can be used by spammers to send spam without your knowledge, often using your email address. Specialised software is available to prevent this from happening. Visit our website at www.spam.acma.gov.au for tips on how you can protect your computer.

Protect your email address when online
Spammers automatically collect (or ‘harvest’) email addresses from the internet. Avoid giving out your email address where possible. If you must publish your personal details online for business or personal purposes, you can help protect yourself by providing a general email address, rather than a personalised email account or using a web-form on your website.

Do not respond if an email message seems dubious
If an email slips through your spam filter, this does not automatically mean it is legitimate. Spammers can use emotive subject lines to entice recipients to open emails and respond. If you receive an email that seems dubious, or the subject line or sender looks suspicious, it is safest to delete it immediately without opening it. Do not reply, and do not click on any links, including ‘unsubscribe’ links; doing so may result in even more spam. Do not buy spam-advertised products or services as they may be fraudulent. You can help the ACMA fight spam by reporting it to the ACMA at www.spam.acma.gov.au or by calling 1300 855 180.

If the source seems genuine, unsubscribe
A legitimate email marketing message should identify the company, contain a functional unsubscribe facility and be sent with your consent. If the message seems to promote a legitimate Australian business or is from a business that you know or deal with and you no longer wish to receive it, try using the unsubscribe facility. As legitimate businesses do not operate in the same way as professional spammers, unsubscribing from these emails can be a low-risk and quick way to prevent receiving emails in the future.

Reporting spam to ACMA
To report or complain about spam you have received, contact the ACMA. Information about the Spam Act, frequently asked questions and complaint and enquiry forms are available at www.spam.acma.gov.au or by calling 1300 855 180.

Other useful contacts
For information on protecting your children online, visit www.cybersmart.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 of publication, it should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases.