



Web Security and Maintenance Services

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Privacy, Security & Virus Information

SPAM: Why Did it Start and Where is it Headed?

“SPAM” is the common name for junk mail that arrives each day in your email account's in-box.

How did they get my address?

Spammers create their mailing lists in a number of ways. Commonly, they will build computer programs that scan the internet and steal email addresses that have been posted on message boards and blog sites. Or, spammers will also hack into computers and steal lists of web addresses. These lists can be found from your internet provider, consumer sites on which you shop, or membership sites with whom you have registered.

Why do Spammers Spam?

Most spammers chose this route for advertising because it is cheap. In fact, there are virtually no costs associated with it if they steal the mailing lists and writing the ad themselves.

Spam is also used in [online fraud](#) whereby the sender poses as a charity or other organization in need of funds. The goal of the email is to convince you, the receiver, to send a donation for a cause that does not actually exist.

Who does Spam Harm?

Everyone. People who receive the spam waste time and energy as they wade through and delete the unwanted emails. These victims of spam also face the risk that the messages will carry [viruses](#), Trojan Horses, or most commonly, Worms.

Additionally, spam also harms everyone who pays for his or her internet service. Spam takes up valuable space, meaning that ISPs and online services are using resources to transmit it. The cost of this can be blamed, in part, for the increases to internet subscription fees.

Where is Spam Heading?

Internet users are becoming a lot smarter about Spam, and do not even bother opening the emails. This does not prevent the spam from clogging their internet accounts, but it does mean that advertisers and fraudsters are finding spam a lot less effective.

One group that is not giving up so easily, are the spammers who send viruses. Now, instead of sending emails from anonymous sources, these spammers hope to trick users into opening infected emails by having them arrive from friends and colleagues.



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Virus designers create worms that infect a person's computer and send their own emails. This means that your computer worm could be using your email account to send itself to all of your contacts without your knowledge.

A second strategy is to embed the virus in a type of chain mail. Poems, quotes, jokes, and words of inspiration are then intentionally forwarded from person to person spreading the virus.

How to Protect Yourself

It now appears virtually impossible for an internet user to know which emails contain threats and which do not. This is especially true of chain spam, which is very popular with younger generations.

Virus protection software that scans and isolates email threats is the best solution to protecting yourself. McAfee Virus Scan Plus and McAfee SpamKiller fight spam on two fronts.

Unwanted messages are directly filtered from your in-box, stopping the threat before it even reaches you.

Emails from friends and colleagues are scanned for threats to prevent the unintentional opening of infected messages.