

ASK THE COMPUTER SURGEON

Avoid getting slammed with spam

The Blough Family writes *“Although, we must admit, we do not understand everything you write in the articles, we are enjoying them & learning.*

One question we do have is how to get off the mass e-mailing lists. About 2 weeks ago, we started getting a lot of spam messages. We are now getting about 50-70 per day. What can we do aside of changing our e-mail address?”

Let's dive into this question head first!

Have you ever browsed to a web site and downloaded something? Did you notice the little check box that asked if it was ok for them to send you messages now and then? Did you read the fine print describing what they were allowed to do with your e-mail (and mailing address too) address? Often, you are giving permission for them to send you advertisements. Sometimes, you are giving them permission to sell your e-mail address to other advertisers!

Often products are sold at a discount because companies are supplementing their income by selling your information to advertisers.

A spam message is an unsolicited e-mail message sent by a person or group known as a spammer. To build lists of valid e-mail addresses, spammers use numerous techniques.

One technique is to “guess” at e-mail addresses; another is to scan the web for addresses using the Google search engine; another is to develop viruses which send infected computers address books to the spammer; and yet another is to steal addresses from a business which has your address with your permission.

And there are more... what is the technique that you know about that I have not listed here? Please send it to questions@compusurgeon.com!

There is much conjecture about why spammers spam. Money is made by pushing traffic to certain web sites which require a purchase to view. Much spam is also connected with underground, illegal and terrorist activities. Coded messages are sent in the spam message.

Sellers of products, services, web site logins, and criminals benefit from spam. You may have noticed that a great deal of spam is about drugs and pornographic services. Both of these are compulsory purchases with credit cards on-line for a low price. It is surprising to read about what is known as “click through” rates! If you want to stop spam, stop clicking through on the spam messages!

Limiting spam is tough! Changing your e-mail address is one way. Many times, however, spam builds right back up because of the various reasons listed above. A spam filter on your computer works somewhat. A better solution is to subscribe to a scrubbing service and run your mail through it before getting it in you inbox. Many e-mail hosts are now offering this service and it works pretty good. The best solution is to develop a list of people who are allowed to send you mail and only accept mail from them!

I suppose it goes without saying, this is a complex issue with no easy answer. The best solution is for everyone to avoid clicking through on all spam. If the money dries up, the spam will dry up!

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Please write to questions@compusurgeon.com.