

I am receiving vast numbers of junk e-mails daily, offering me various potions and other such services, none of which I want. Can you help me?

Unfortunately, SPAM (which is a computer term for junk e-mails) is a fact of life today. Every time you give out your e-mail address to someone you run the risk of it being sold or forwarded to 'spammers'.

People often find they start getting spam soon after they:

- Buy something online and give their e-mail address to the supplier
- Sign up for an internet service that asks for an e-mail address
- Reply to a spam e-mail (this simply confirms to the spammer that your e-mail address is valid)
- Give out their e-mail address on a website or post a message on a newsgroup

Unfortunately, once you're on a spam list it is practically impossible to escape. But avoiding these traps may help you avoid getting more of the same in the future.

How can I avoid spam?

Now you know how valuable your e-mail address is, think about whether internet sites that ask for it really need it. If the site doesn't need your e-mail address to contact you or send you a password, you could always 'accidentally' misspell your e-mail address.

Steps to avoid getting on a spammers list:

- **Never** reply to a spam e-mail
- Change your personal e-mail address and only give it to people you know and trust
- Use a second e-mail address (such as Hotmail or Yahoo) when purchasing goods online

I have found two websites which are offering free spam filtering software: www.mailwasher.net and www.spambully.com, both of which might be worth a try.

Most reputable internet service providers now offer a spam identification service which will put the word 'SPAM' in the subject line of the e-mail. If you are using an e-mail programme such as Outlook Express, you can set up a Mail Rule that re-directs e-mails with certain words (e.g. SPAM) in the subject line to your Deleted Items folder.

If you would like details on how to set up an Outlook Express Message Rule, please e-mail me on agony@suffolktutorsgroup.co.uk