

What is spam?

Email spam is unsolicited commercial or junk email sent to a number of users at once.

Some “spammers” (as people who send spam messages are known) send tens of thousands of messages at a time. This can place a huge strain on the already overworked Internet infrastructure.

The majority of Internet users disapprove of spam. In fact, many hate it with a passion. Users caught spamming will generally have their Internet account terminated by their Internet Service Provider. There have been instances where spammers have been successfully sued by Internet Service Providers to recoup their costs of combatting spam.

What is the legal position on spam?

All provisions of the Spam Act 2003 are now in force. Commercial electronic messages must only be sent with the addressee's consent, must include clear and accurate identification of the sender, and must include a functional unsubscribe facility.

What is iSage's Spam policy?

iSage supports free electronic commerce, but condemns the use of spam. You may report spam to support@isage.net.au

Who sends spam?

A small percentage of first-time spammers are genuinely unaware that their actions generate such feelings of animosity. They believe that spamming is a cheap, legitimate and effective way to market their products to a large audience.

There are also a number of “professional” spammers, who sell their “marketing” services to unsuspecting businesses and individuals looking to peddle their products and services online. Many professional spammers do not disclose the fact that they use spam as their main marketing tool.

Where do they get my email address?

One of the most popular sources of email addresses is Usenet (Internet news) newsgroups. When you post a message to a newsgroup, your email address is automatically included in your message by your newsreader program, unless you specifically instruct it not to. It is quite an easy process to harvest email addresses from the tens of thousands of messages posted to Usenet each day.

Similarly, if you participate in email discussion groups, it is possible (though not as easy) for spammers to collect email addresses from messages sent to the list.

If you own a Web site, and include your email address as part of your contact information, this information is publicly available to both legitimate and illegitimate users.

Many spammers make use of sophisticated software programs that sift through newsgroups, Web sites and other public sources of information, looking for email addresses. They are able to harvest millions of email addresses in this manner.

If you have ever entered an online competition that requires you to submit your email details (as most do), you may have unwittingly added yourself to the mailing list of a spammer.

If you use a chat service (such as IRC), and have entered your email address in the personal information section of the software that you are using, you may be displaying your email address to other chat users.

Even if you have never disclosed your email address in any of these forums, you may still receive spam. How? Spammers have been known to make up email addresses. From a purely statistical viewpoint, if you generate millions of random email addresses, you are likely to create a percentage of valid ones.

How do I avoid spam?

There are a number of ways you can avoid or minimise the amount of spam you receive:

Try to keep your email address private. This can be difficult (after all, you want people to be able to email you).

Avoid including your real email address in any message you send to a newsgroup or mailing list.

If you join email discussion lists, you should ask the owner/moderator what steps have been taken to ensure that the email addresses of participants are kept private. It is surprisingly easy to obtain a list of member's email addresses, thanks to the nature of discussion list administration software. It is also, however, easy for the list owner/moderator to implement safeguards.

Don't publish your email address on your Web site. If you must include your email address, create a graphic icon that contains your email address (spammer's search software only look for email addresses that appear in the text of a Web site, and cannot grab your email address if it is in graphic form).

Learn how to make use of "email anonymisers". These are services that allow you to send email anonymously – that is, your email is stripped of identifying information (such as your email address) before it is sent. This will ensure that your email address is not included in messages sent to public discussion forums. Not all discussion forums, however, allow users to post anonymously.

What can I do?

You can report spam to the ACMA [here](#)