

# Reporting SPAM To SpamCop.net

By Aaron Turpen

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The number of unsolicited emails I receive seems to increase by the day. This is apparently a part of the job when you're doing business online. After all, I have over a dozen email accounts for various things and each of them will get on someone's UCE or SPAM list eventually. The question is what to do with this SPAM once it's been received.

Most people already know the conventional wisdom:

- Don't respond to SPAM, if the return email address does actually work, the sender is more than likely to add you to his or her "good emails" list and send you even more stuff.
- If there is an "opt-out" link in the email, click it and try to unsubscribe. Beware that this can sometimes be a more elaborate version of the above ruse, but at least you tried.
- Use "filters" on commonalities in the SPAM you receive to automatically trash or move potential SPAM to another folder and out of sight until you're ready to wade into them. Common words and phrases like "MAKE MONEY" or "!!!" and especially "viagra" should be flagged as potential SPAM. I recommend setting up filters based on SPAM you already receive. Don't bother with email addresses (they change all the time), just focus on subject lines and/or message bodies.

Now I'm going to show you another way to report this SPAM and possibly get the SPAMmer shut down by his or her ISP for sending it. If enough complaints are made, most ISPs will shut down the offender for fear of losing their own connections to the Internet. Loss of a connection or the addition of their network to "blockades" or "blacklists" means the ISP will lose money as customers realize they can't send email to certain places and are not allowed access to some websites.

The SPAMmer will probably just move on to another ISP and set up shop again, but for the time being, you've shut down their operation and caused an interruption. You've also hit them where it hurts: it costs money to move your operation on the fly and the SPAMmer has also lost "hits" to the website they were advertising. All of this adds up to dollars lost and dollars are what make the SPAMmer do what he or she is doing.

So who do you report your SPAM to and how do you go about it? The most respected anti-SPAM operation on the Internet today is SpamCop. Started by a college student who got tired of seeing his inbox fill with unsolicited email every day, it has grown to be a respected and powerful cornerstone on the Internet. Thousands of ISPs subscribe to the "blacklists" that SpamCop publishes and updates regularly - which contain IP addresses and website addresses for known SPAMmers and the ISPs who allow them to operate. These lists are used to "filter" incoming email and sometimes to block users from visiting certain areas of the Internet.

For regular users, signing up at SpamCop is free. For those with a high volume of email or who wish to subscribe to the blacklists SpamCop offers, there is a cost involved. You'll be surprised how small it is, though!

The first thing you'll need to do is sign onto the SpamCop site and open an account. Obviously, for a site like this, keeping your information safe is a priority. Signup is quick and painless. Once you've signed up, you'll receive an email with a website link and email address personalized for you. Using these two tools, you can report SPAM that you receive. There are also options for filtering your incoming email using SpamCop's built-in filters for about \$5 a year.

Now on to reporting your SPAM to the SpamCop system: when you receive an email that qualifies as Unsolicited Commercial Email (check SpamCop's rules, they're fairly strict about what qualifies), you will need to report it. I generally collect all of them throughout the day and then report them all at once by forwarding them through my email to my personal SpamCop reporting address. You can do them one-at-a-time as well, though. Just forward the email (hit your "Forward" button) or send it as an attachment (Outlook: Message Forward As Attachment – most other email clients are similar). Either way, you'll need to send it to your personal SpamCop reporting address. I suggest putting that into your contacts list as "SpamCop" or something similar for easy use.

Once you've forwarded the email, you'll receive an auto-response from the SpamCop system asking you to follow a special link, which will take you to a page that contains a bunch of information about the email you reported. Included in that information are checkboxes for the ISPs the email traveled through and the originator of the email (if known). Usually, the checked boxes by default are all you need to use and you can leave the other boxes unchecked. Press the "Send Spam Report(s) Now" button and you're finished. The report is added to the database and, if enough people complain about the same email or the same source of that email, that source will be added to the blacklist.

From an ISP's perspective, each complaint (without your contact information or email) is sent to the administrator or administrator account on the particular server in question. This person gets an email from SpamCop indicating a complaint has been made and gives them a chance to follow a link to the website and try to defend themselves. Before a site is added to the blacklist, a SpamCop reviewer will look these reports over and decide whether the complaints are faulty (based on the emails sent to the system) or the ISP should be banned. Once on the blacklist, it is very difficult to be removed. Most are on the list for at least six months.

There are some other great resources on the SpamCop site you might also be interested in - especially if you're an email list administrator, newsletter publisher, or other bulk-mail-related business. If you are serious about slowing down or culling the amount of SPAM proliferating around the Internet, if you are tired of receiving SPAM and want to do something about it, or even if you just wish you had somewhere to send it other than just your computer's trash bin, I would suggest joining SpamCop. Here's another hint to do something about the junk mail you receive in your postal mailbox as well: open all of them and take the ones that include a return envelope (postage paid) and stuff all of their crap back into that and send it back to them – they're paying the postage! Try it; it'll make you feel better.

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