

# Spam Revisited

By Stuart Reid

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Spam has reared it's ugly head again. I got thinking about it because of a few articles I've noticed on the subject popping up here and there. One side of it concerns spam filtering software (the reason you keep seeing weird words like FR^E instead of FREE as publishers try to avoid the trap) and secondly it concerns over zealous `spam cops`.

Here's my take on it. I mentioned this briefly in the bonus issue a few days ago :o)

1. No matter how much mail you're receiving please be sure that you didn't request it. Some things that look like spam are really ads or offers from places you've given permission to. Be vigilant when you enter your e-mail into forms or reply to autoresponders. Watch out for terms such as 'Allow carefully selected companies to send you special offers' or similar!
  2. It's easy enough to manage your spam by managing your e-mail addresses. Use multiple accounts to make sure important mail goes one place, and junk goes another. Use one address for all those web forms you fill in.
  3. Don't use spam filtering software. None of it really works, yet. If you do use it please be sure to allow your e-zines through. For example, mine always begins with the subject NNews: making it easy for you to filter, or unblock, as the case may be. The address will always be netpreneurnow.com, so you can also enable that domain. No-one else uses that domain bar me!
- Some mail service, such as HotMail, have an `exclusive` feature where ONLY e-mails and domains authorized by you are allowed through. That's good to have on your primary, private e-mail. Only mail from contacts can come there. Just be sure to add any new correspondents to your address book or you won't get their mail!
4. Now for the mail that is spam. If it has an unsubscribe link, use it. I know that a lot of unsubscribe links are ignored but the majority do work. If there's no link there's not much you can do except delete it. Can you manage to press that little button?

5. A lot of the stuff you find on the internet is free or nearly so because of advertising. If you enjoy an e-zine, and benefit from it, I'm sure that you can manage an extra ad or two? If you don't like the e-zine or perhaps they're a little to overboard with their solos then just unsubscribe. It's totally under your control. Just remember that a e-zine represents a lot of work to the writer at no cost to you, but I'm glad to have you anyway! :oD

6. The only mailings that I would class as spam are those that I never requested, also called UCE (unsolicited commercial email). Some people bend the rules (a lot!) and take the fact that you e-mailed them to be a good reason to e-mail you ads back. I would not call it spam as such but it isn't really good practice.

Another type of unwanted e-mail are those that come from services that were only \*supposed\* to mail you once, but keep doing it.

Finally, the worst kind, are those that just take your e-mail from web pages, news groups or whatever then send you mail. That's the only way someone gets your address without you doing anything short of stealing it from another service. Those people who use e-mail scavengers are the kind that deserve the bad press.

6b. But, like anything, there's a grey area there. If I take e-mail addresses of web sites to request a link swap or similar am I spamming? If I use Zeus (which does the same thing) is that spam? No, because there's no ad involved in those situations. Do not forget the middle word in `Unsolicited Commercial Email`!

7. And those Spam Cops. I've never encountered one, but the things I hear aren't too good. I'd suggest they are a little more thorough in their investigations and less hasty. Dialogue is much better!

So how do you say safe from a publishers point of view? Newsletters / Ezines should always be opt in. Don't add someone because they posted to your FFA but an `invitation` could be ok. Don't add bulk lists to your autoresponders. Basically, ensure that anyone who gets mail from you has given you permission!

No doubt this debate will go on and on. Spam will get worse, but as long as you can distinguish between Spam and Advertising and take some basic steps with your accounts all should be ok.

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Stuart Reid is the publisher of Netpreneur News and webmaster of Netpreneur Now! Visit us for weekly tips, reviews, recommendations and more. Sign up for a free ad and 30 free e-books.

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