

Spam Filters Blockers: The solution to unsolicited email?

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Spam Filters & Blockers: The solution to unsolicited email?

By Anti Spam League

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Spam is a term that, for the vast majority of us, has a very negative connotation. How could it be different when the average Internet user gets over 50 pieces of junk email per day? Moreover, research indicates that by 2006 the average internet user can expect to receive at least 5,000 pieces of spam per year. That sure is a giant amount of spam!

None of us want to waste our time, our bandwidth and our hard drive space to receive spam and then delete it. Because our day-to-day lives are delayed, interrupted and significantly disturbed by this large number of unsolicited email, software manufacturers have developed a number of products especially designed to fight spam. These products might be called `spam filters', `anti spam filters', `e-mail filters', `spam blockers' and even `spam killers'. Regardless of the name, their purpose remains the same: to eliminate the spam in your inbox. We have not yet seen a spam filter that achieves 100% accuracy but the latest products launched into the market as well as the newest versions of existing products are proving to be more and more successful.

In case you are wondering specifically what these products do and how they do it, you should know that a spam filter is a program that – web based, server based or installed locally – prevents spam email from being downloaded to your PC. The spam filter itself operates on the basis of rules, which means that the spam fighting program will examine your incoming email and match it against a set of pre-defined criteria. If the email does not match those rules, then it is either: a) Deleted, or b) Quarantined for Review. There are three basic types of traditional anti-spam software:

- 1) Plug-ins for email clients – These anti spam programs run on your computer and require all received spam to be downloaded before they start sorting it.
- 2) Standalone applications – These spam blockers also run on your computer and communicate with the email server multiple times each hour to check your POP mailbox for spam and delete it. They constantly run in the background, using up resources and bandwidth.
- 3) Server-based email spam filters – Many ISPs and email servers (Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, etc.) have installed email filtering software that scans email for certain triggers, which may include certain phrases, formatting, and aggressive writing styles. A server based spam filter is designed to examine the email being sent to your Internet Service Provider or local area network and to filter it effectively before the email is delivered to you. When this works, it works effectively, however it is not perfect.

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Unfortunately, many unfair marketers have learned to fool spam filters while a lot of legitimate emails are blocked by them.

Of the spam filters that are on the market at the moment the vast majority of them need to be installed to your hard drive. However, there is a move towards spam filters that do all the work online before the email ever gets to your computer. Most of today's email applications come with a basic spam filter that allows you to block email from specific addresses. Some more complicated email software allows you to configure rules just for that software itself. This can get pretty complex pretty quickly! But people who suffer from tons of spam want a simple solution to their problem – not more headaches. On this note, one of the most popular PC-based spam solutions on the market today is Mailwasher Pro, which has a really nice feature that allows you to send a reply to the spammer that mimics a `mailer daemon' error message; that is, when the spammer gets this message from you he assumes your email address no longer exists. Simple but effective.

Other well-known spam blockers are iHate Spam, McAfee Spamkiller, Spam Inspector 4.0, Spam Arrest, Qurb, Choicemail One, among others. iHate Spam is an easy-to-use and effective spam filtering solution for Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora, Incredimail and Hotmail users. McAfee Spamkiller has several innovative features such as protection against Dictionary Attacks (made up names) and foreign language spam, and also supports Outlook, Outlook Express and other popular email programs. Based on personal and global learning networks, Spam Inspector 4.0 adapts itself to your email automatically, filtering out the junk mail with an impressive accuracy.

A particular type of spam filters are the so-called `Bayesian spam filters'. These are considered intelligent filters, because they are capable of comparing two sets of information and acting on the result. This differentiating feature of Bayesian filters is in direct opposition with the vast majority of other spam filters which use pre-built rules to decide which email is spam and which is not. Bayesian spam filters take one group of legitimate email and another group of spam, and then compare the values and data of each. They look for obvious repeating patterns to form an `opinion' on something. In spam filter terms that `opinion' becomes a rule. The definition of legitimate email that they create at the end of this comparison session is what they use going forward to scan your inbox for spam. Yes indeed, these spam filters are capable of learning. For example, if the filter blocked an email because it was perceived as junk, then the user marked it as a valid email, then they will not to block that type of email in the future. Thus, in time, this type of spam filter learns enough to block spam far more effectively. Some of the Bayesian spam filtering options available today include AOL's Communicator product, Eudora, and Spambully. Although the latter is a fairly new product, it is already making waves in the sea of spam fighting software. Spambully provides an integrated solution for users of both Outlook and Outlook Express, and its creators claim it can remove 99% of spam.

Finally we would like to point out two free spam blockers that provide good filtering capabilities. They are prime examples of Bayesian spam filters and perfect examples that freeware does not necessarily mean low quality. The first of these products is called Popfile and the second one is called Spampal. Both are Windows only software products.

In conclusion, although no spam blocking product can currently guarantee 100% accuracy, one thing is for sure: the more positive, affirmative action you take against spammers by deleting, blocking and/or blacklisting them, the less spam you will receive. Spam filters and spam blockers can really help us along the fierce battle against spam. The more action we take, the smaller the spam problem will become. Wouldn't that make us happier?

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If you want to learn more about this and other related topics, check out www.Anti-Spam-League.org. This organization offers free membership and the chance to access a wide amount of relevant information on privacy, spam, email abuse, Internet fraud, responsible marketing and several other topics.

The purpose of the Anti SPAM League is to help consumers and business owners reduce the amount of SPAM they receive. In addition, our Anti SPAM organization believes that educating site owners in the area of SPAM prevention and ways to successfully and responsibly market their sites, is key in making a difference.

Finding The Best Anti Spam Solutions

By Oliver Turner

Before you start finding the best anti spam solutions, there are some simple steps that you will have to take care in order to avoid spam. Make sure that you share your email ID with only those whom you know well. For other services, make use of email services that are web based. Beware of spam bots. They are programs that are made to accumulate the email IDs throughout the net for preparing a mailing list. This list is used to send all unsolicited mails to users. Try to use the form of email that do not display your address in the webpage code. Install various kinds of anti-virus and other anti-spyware programs. Keep updating the version frequently. Email configuration should be done to disable the features that identify an email while you are downloading some images.

Easy Anti Spam Solutions at your Service

Now that you have taken all the basic precautionary measures, it is time to look for the program oriented anti spam filters. You can use the SpamPal identifies the well known spammers with the help of spam blacklists. eXpurgate, requiring two different email IDs, works well in filtering spam. POPFile are very effective in categorizing and separating the unsolicited mails from the personal messages. For POP accounts, Death2Spam is extremely effective. MailWasher Pro is secure and a time-saving spam filter that also protect your computer from viruses. Some of the other effective spam filters include Spam Bully, Spam Inspector, and Zaep. Another effective spam filter is the Spamihilator that takes the help of Bayesian filters to protect the email accounts.

You can even block the spam with the help of spam blockers. Anti spam for outlook includes Spam Bully that keeps your inbox free of spam. They work with Bayesian Spam Filter that makes use of artificial intelligence along with server blacklists to filter in only the wanted mails. They often put forth a password to be typed in correctly by unfamiliar sender so as to allow that mail into your inbox. Some of them are pre programmed where the know spammers are inserted. They accordingly block them. Some of the programs filter the emails based on the keywords used in the mails. Some of the email spam filters are configured and can be easily customized. Thus, with some basic knowledge about spam and the anti spam software, you can easily find the best anti spam solutions.

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