

Dealing with unsolicited E-mail

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Spam e-mails

Unsolicited e-mails¹ are a continuing and growing source of annoyance in this electronic-mail dependent era. There are two issues arising:

- a) Firstly how to protect your e-mail address from being passed on to the vast number of spammers in cyberspace; and
- b) Secondly to how block junk e-mails from being displayed on your e-mail program (eg: Outlook Express).

Protecting the privacy of your e-mail address

How your e-mail address is obtained by spammers:

- i. When you provide your e-mail address to a commercial web site (eg: when ordering over the internet or answering a survey) it is often passed on to a variety of commercial databases which operate in much the same way as ordinary mailing lists. These are on-sold, or sometimes illicitly copied and as a result your e-mail address may be propagated into hundreds of lists;
- ii. Through software that generates random e-mail addresses in the hope that someone will respond to them; or

¹ Known as "spam" or "junk mail"

- iii. When your system is infected by an e-mail virus.

To protect your privacy:

1. Avoid giving out the e-mail address you use for your practice except to people you know personally.
2. Establish a Hotmail or similar account² specifically for use on commercial web sites. These accounts are free and operate independently of your usual e-mail account. Eventually this account will be overwhelmed with junk mail. When this happens simply abandon this account and establish a new one.
3. Never respond³ to any junk e-mail that invites you to reply in order to remove your name from their mailing list. This is a trap designed to identify active e-mail accounts. Once answered your address is specifically identified as active and will be further disseminated to other mailing lists.
4. Never open attachments from unknown senders. It is very highly likely that the attachment contains a virus. Some of these viruses (eg: Klez) actually pass on your e-mail address and data from your PC to hundreds of other infected computers. It is always better to be cautious about any attachment whether or not the sender is known to you. If you have any doubts send a message to the sender to confirm what they sent to you.

² www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com.au

³ There are no exceptions to this rule.

Blocking junk e-mails

If all else fails it is possible to limit the number of junk e-mails that you receive.

Block one sender's address only

1. Choose the e-mail you want blocked and on Outlook Express click on **MESSAGE** and then click on **BLOCK SENDER**. Any e-mail from this address will be sent immediately to the **DELETED ITEMS** section.

Block a certain category of e-mail

2. There is a more complex method. You can block a particular *category* of e-mail, ie: those related to particular topics which suggest that they are unsolicited⁴.
3. To do this click on **MESSAGE** and then click on **CREATE RULE FROM MESSAGE**. There follows a rather intricate set of questions about what you want to exclude.
4. Pressing F1 will display a series of instructions about how to answer the questions required to set it up.
5. This is really more suited to an advanced user.

⁴ With phrases like "Debt consolidation" or "buy a university degree" or "make a million dollars in a day"