



What is Spam?

"Spam is flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message, in an attempt to force the message on people who would not otherwise choose to receive it." -Scott Hazen Mueller

Most spam is commercial advertising. There are two main types of spam, Usenet spam (newsgroups) and Email spam. This article concentrates on Email spam.

Email spam targets individual users with direct mail messages. Email spams typically cost users money because ISPs and online services have to use "air-time" to transmit spam, and these costs are transmitted directly to you the subscribers in the form of increases to your access fees.

One of the most despicable forms of email spam is sending spam to mailing lists (public or private email discussion forums.) Spammers will use automated tools to subscribe to as many mailing lists as possible, so that they can use the mailing list as a direct target for their attacks.

So, is spam bad? Most people would prefer not to receive unsolicited e-mail (junk e-mail). Consider the following reasons that Scott Mueller, Editor-in-Chief of spam.abuse.net, presents and decide for yourself:

✗ **The free ride.** E-mail spam is unique in that the receiver pays so much more for it than the sender does.

- ✗ The "oceans of spam" problem. Many spam messages say "please send a REMOVE message to get off our list." Even disregarding the question of why you should have to do anything to get off a list you never asked to join, this becomes completely impossible if the volume grows.
- ✗ The theft of resources. An increasing number of spammers, send most or all of their mail via innocent intermediate systems, to avoid blocks that many systems have placed against mail coming directly from the spammers' systems.
- ✗ It's all garbage. The spam messages I've seen have almost without exception advertised stuff that's worthless, deceptive, and partly or entirely fraudulent.
- ✗ They're crooks. Spam software invariably comes with a list of names falsely claimed to be of people who've said they want to receive ads, but actually consisting of unwilling victims culled at random from usenet or mailing lists.
- ✗ It might be illegal. Some kinds of spam are illegal in some countries on the Internet. Especially with pornography, mere possession of such material can be enough to put the recipient in jail. In the United States, child pornography is highly illegal and we've already seen spammed child porn offers.

If you want to learn more about spam visit: <http://spam.abuse.net/>

Senate Bill S.630

The Senate Commerce Committee recently passed bill S.630. This bill has been highlighted in the press because if it becomes law, it will significantly limit unsolicited email.

Basically, this bill (and possibly future law) makes it illegal to send spam in any form unless recipients have given explicit consent to receive such email.

We as users would be required to "opt in" to receive these messages, rather than having to "opt out", which does not appear to work well.

The proposed law would also provide the right for both individual and class action law suites, and enable us to collect monetary damages.

Senate Bill S. 630 Summary:

Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN SPAM) Act of 2001/2002 (S. 630)

S. 630 was introduced by Sen. Conrad R. Burns (R-MT) in March 2001. It would require unsolicited commercial e-mail messages to be labeled and to include opt-out instructions, and would prohibit deceptive subject lines and false headers in such messages.

S. 630 was amended in the Senate Commerce Committee in May 2002 to include a provision prohibiting the use of e-mail addresses harvested from web sites in violation of posted restrictions.

For more information about anti-spam legislation visit: <http://www.spamlaws.com/federal/summ107.html>