
COPING WITH SPAM USING MICROSOFT OUTLOOK 2003

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1 What is Spam?

Spam is a slang term for unsolicited commercial email. (It is *not* the same as SPAM™, a canned meat product from the Hormel Corporation. SPAM™ is good, spam is bad.)

2 Why Do I Get Spam?

It's simple; because your email address is widely distributed, it gets put into electronic mailing lists. If you have put your email address on a webpage, used it to post to an online forum or newsgroup, or included it when filling out a form on a commercial website, more than likely your address will wind up in a commercial mailing list. Some Windows viruses (particularly the Lovgate series) are believed to harvest email addresses from the files of the machines they infect and send them to spammers. Besides that, the addresses of staff members at Iowa State University are public records by Iowa law and must be made available to anyone who asks. And yes, unless you specifically tell it not to, the university can sell your student email address to selected mailers.

3 How Can I Make Spam Go Away?

You will probably never be able to completely eliminate spam from your inbox. Even the best of filters will only catch part of the junk mail sent to you. Even if you change your email address, it will only give you a brief respite until your new address is harvested from somewhere on the web. However, there are steps you can take to reduce the amount of spam you receive.

- **Unsubscribe from groups you are no longer using**

Some of the spam you receive probably is not precisely spam. If you signed up for something on a webpage, such as requesting information or downloading or registering a software package you purchased, you may have inadvertently asked them to send you mail—and that is *not* spam. If you really have subscribed to a newsletter and you no longer want to receive it, unsubscribe from it. Check the text of the message; there is often an unsubscribe link or an email address to send a message to be removed from the list. However, do not try this on unsolicited email messages, since less scrupulous spammers will simply use your unsubscribe request as an indication that your email address is active and send you *more* spam.

- **Use an alternative email address in commercial webpages**

Instead of using your primary email address to sign in to commercial webpages, establish another account with one of the free providers like Yahoo, Netscape, or Hotmail, and use that address instead. (Yahoo is especially good, as it allows you to create hundreds of unique

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To contact the Editor, send email to aiteditor@iastate.edu.

addresses.) That way, you will keep your spam separate from the real messages. Be polite, though; log in to those accounts periodically and delete the spam.

- **Use filters in your email client**

Most of the email clients you can use to read email give you filters to sort your mail into different mailboxes based on sender, subject, and other criteria. Those filters can be used to make spam go away as well.

To help your mail client in this quest, Iowa State has provided a “spam tagging” system called PerlMX. PerlMX examines all the messages that come to @iastate.edu addresses from outside the university and calculates the probability that the message is spam. That information is placed in a special header that you will not normally see, but which most mail clients use to filter the email into spam and non-spam categories.

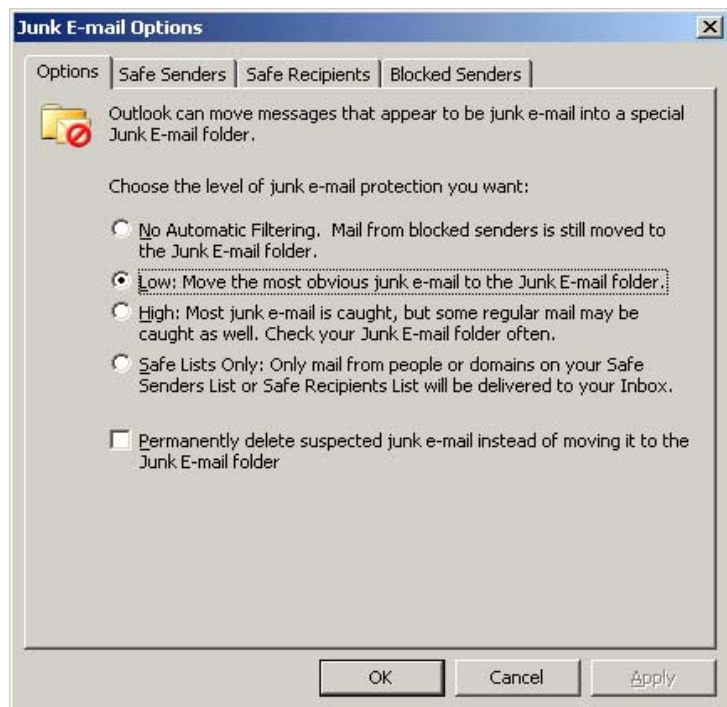
4 Using Filters in Outlook 2003

Microsoft Outlook 2003 includes spam filtering capabilities, though it is not as trainable as the Junk filter in Eudora. Outlook will filter messages based on its own concept of spam, and you can block or permit mail from individual email addresses.

4.1 Built-in Spam Filtering

Outlook allows you to set the threshold for its own spam filtering to four different levels: Safe Lists Only, High, Low, and No Automatic Filtering. The default is Low, which moves the most obvious spam to the Junk E-mail folder. In our tests, this left about 25 percent of incoming spam in the Inbox.

To change the level of protection, click “Actions”, then select “Junk E-mail”, and then “Junk E-mail Options”. Select the level you would like in the dialog box as shown here and click “OK”. We do not recommend that you check “Permanently delete suspected junk e-mail...”, as this will cause any message selected as spam, whether correctly or incorrectly, to be deleted immediately.



4.1.1 Adding Addresses to the Blocked Senders and Safe Senders Lists

There is no way of training Outlook 2003 to recognize messages as spam from their content. However, messages can be filtered based on the sending address. To add the sender of a message to the Blocked Senders list, highlight that message in the Inbox and click “Actions”, then select “Junk E-mail”, and then “Add sender to Blocked Senders list”.

To “rescue” a legitimate email from the Junk E-mail folder, highlight that message in the list and click “Actions”, then select “Junk E-mail”, and then “Mark as Not Junk”. This will move the message to the Inbox and add the sender to the Safe Senders list.

4.1.2 Allowing Mail by Recipient

For newsletters, mailing lists and similar bulk mailings Outlook allows you to add receiving addresses to the Safe Recipients list. Highlight the message in the Junk E-mail message list and click “Actions”, then select “Junk E-mail”, and then “Add Recipient to Safe Recipients List”. This will prevent any message sent from that address from being filtered to the Junk E-mail folder.

4.2 Using PerIMX Headers to Filter Spam

Iowa State has provided a “spam tagging” system called PerIMX. PerIMX examines all the messages that come to `@iastate.edu` addresses from outside the university and calculates the probability that the message is spam. That information is placed in a special header that you will not normally see, but which most mail clients use to filter the email into spam and non-spam categories.

Outlook refers to filters as “rules”, and you will use the Rules and Alerts dialog to add them. This choice will only appear in the Tools menu when the Inbox is selected, so choose the Inbox before you try to add a filter. A rule can be created to filter spam based on the PerIMX headers. To create a rule based on this header, follow these steps:

1. Select “Tools” and then “Rules and Alerts”.
2. View the E-mail Rules tab.
3. Click “New Rule...”
4. Check “Start from a blank rule” and select “Check messages when they arrive”. Click “Next”.
5. Check “with specific words in the message header”.
6. In the rule description, click “specific words”.
7. Under *Specify a word or phrase to search for in the message header*, enter `Gauge=XXXXX` to filter based on a PerIMX probability of 50 percent or more (where each X represents ten percent; add or subtract Xs as needed). Click “Add”, then “OK”, and finally “Next”.
8. Under *What do you want to do with the message?*, check “move it to the specified folder”.
9. In the rule description, click “specified”.
10. Under *Choose a folder*, select “Junk E-mail” and click “OK”.
11. Click “Finish”.

4.3 Additional Filters

To automatically file a received message into a folder based on criteria you specify, do the following:

1. Select “Tools” and then “Rules and Alerts”.
2. View the E-mail Rules tab.
3. Click “New Rule...”
4. Check “Start from a blank rule” and select “Check messages when they arrive”. Click “Next”.
5. Check “from people or distribution list”.

6. Click “people or distribution list” in the rule description.
7. In the box to the right of *Specify the address of the sender*, enter the email address. Click “OK”, then click “Next”.
8. To move the message to a specified folder, check “move it to a specified folder”.
9. Click “specified” in the rule description and choose a folder from the Personal Folders list. If the folder does not already exist, click “New”, enter a name, and click “OK”. When you have selected a folder, click “OK”, then click “Next”.
10. Click “Next”, then “Finish”.

5 More Help

For more assistance, contact the Solution Center by phone at 515.296.6000, on the web at <http://www.ait.iastate.edu/help/>, by email at solution@iastate.edu, or in person at 195 Durham Center.

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