



What can I do about all of this spam?!?! (Part 1)

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Have you ever received an email from a friend stating, "This really happened to me. I thought it was spam, but I really received a check from Bill Gates for \$28,432! Send this message to everyone in your address book and get your check, too!"

How about "Your PayPal account has been suspended due to suspicious activity. Click on this link to reactivate your account."?

Or, have *you* ever received an email from *you* that *you* didn't send?

Then, did you scream to anyone within earshot (and beyond): "I don't want any more spam! Just get rid of it all!"

Let's face it - although you may feel like it, you are not the only person getting spam. Spam is a problem for everyone. So, how much is too much? Should a spam filter remove all unwanted messages so you never see them? How would you feel if your spam filter blocked an email that you were waiting for and you never got a chance to see it? Would you be happy then?

Well, these really are questions you need to ask yourself. In other words, be careful what you wish for because you just might get it. What we're going to do here is teach you how to get what you **really** want out of your email - even if it includes spam.

First things first, let's take a step toward stopping the proliferation of spam by talking about emails that do get through your spam filters. You know, the ones that you don't know what to do with. I get calls all of the time asking, "should I delete this message?" Yes! Do not pass Go! Do not collect \$200. It's all garbage! Your mother really doesn't want you to "enlarge your manhood." Don't call her to find out why she would send such a message to you - she didn't send it. Just get rid of it. Always. Any message that doesn't make sense, isn't from someone you know, or doesn't seem quite right, get rid of it. You can always ask about it later. You'll be happy that you didn't give someone your credit card number or infect your machine. And, please, please, please do not click on a link in a message from any questionable source. Chances are, you'll pay for it.

As someone who receives hundreds of spam messages per day (I've had the same email addresses since the early 90s),

I've grown accustomed to them. Like them? No, but I understand how spammers do their job and how they get around all of the loopholes in the Internet and into your mailbox. So, I live with it. You would be less tense if you did, too.

There are many problems with spam that occur prior to your inbox that most people do not even consider. So, like in all areas of business, one must manage expectations. In this case, you must ask yourself "what do I really want from my spam filter?"

1. Do you want to block as much spam as possible and, if something gets falsely blocked, you won't care about it?
2. Do you want to see all email so you can filter through it to make sure you don't miss anything?

Talking with many people about this, I've come to realize that it really does matter what the purpose is of your email. Business or pleasure? Professional or clerical work? Shopping or chatting? And, these questions properly gauge your true belief about spam.

I sure would like to never have spam, but if one of my customer's is having a problem - and my spam filter blocked their message - I'd be mad and so would my customer. Therefore, I fall into the group that must receive all of my messages, spam or not. Mind you, my filter separates them in my mail client so I can tell what it thinks was spam. Even then, spam still gets through.

If you're not your own boss, check with him or her to make sure that your spam goals are the same as theirs. It might save you problems! Of course, it would be best if your company had a stated spam filtering policy in order to avoid any confusion.

On the other hand, non-professionals and personal users of email tend to want to get rid of spam, no matter what. But, be warned: if you purchase something online and are expecting a receipt or, if you are waiting for a message from that guy or girl that you're going out with on Friday night, it just might not get to you...

In Part II, we'll discuss the different types of available products and how they can help you meet your spam reduction goals.