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## What can I do about all of this spam?!?! (Part 2)

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In Part I of this series on spam, we talked about how to decide which type of spam filter best suits your needs. In this installment, we're going to identify some of the filters that are at your disposal. For the purposes of this writing, we shall limit the discussion of spam filters to products developed for individual use and not server solutions.

Remember:

- The only filter that is 100% effective is to not have email. Spam will find its way to your inbox regardless of the filter software you choose. Overall effectiveness is defined by the percentage of successful "catches" versus the total number of spam messages received.
- The most effective solutions are those backed by companies spending millions on spam technologies.

**Eliminate It!** The best solution for eliminating spam before it arrives in your mailbox is to have an account with an ISP that has a proactive filtering regime. AOL, Yahoo!, Earthlink and others boast about their spam filtering software. I tend to believe them. Since it is their primary selling point, there would be a mass uproar of disapproval if it were false. DSL and Cable-based ISPs (this includes RoadRunner, Comcast, Verizon, SBC, etc.) are typically a big step down in the fight against spam. Therefore, and I really hate to say this, if you dislike spam so much that you want to see as little of it as possible, then get an email account with one of the really big ISPs – they seem to be the only companies spending the millions and millions of dollars and aggressively fighting this enemy. Again, please remember these points:

- The filters are very aggressive. Some messages will be falsely identified and deleted before you ever see them.
- You will spend more money, around \$20+ per month. If you want broadband, you will pay more.

**Show Me the Spam!** If you're like me, you can't risk losing a message before seeing it. So, while filters are necessary, it must be one that places messages identified as spam into a specified location for review. All of the products below adhere to this rule.

Cloudmark Desktop ([www.cloudmark.com](http://www.cloudmark.com), \$39.95 per year) is the award winning spam-filtering product that stands apart from all of the others because of the method used to identify spam. Instead of utilizing a mathematical algorithm to identify spam-like properties, each individual email is compared to a central database to see if other users have reported that specific message as spam. If so, the message is placed in your spam folder. Cloudmark is the most successful spam filtering application that I've ever used. Pros: Very low

false positive rate - individual emails have an extremely low chance of being marked as spam because no one else can claim that they've received it! Cons: No Mac; bulk-type emails, like newsletters, may be blocked by other users, be sure to "unblock" them.

Trend Micro's PC-cillin ([www.trendmicro.com](http://www.trendmicro.com), \$49.95 per year) stands apart from others because it incorporates other products (e.g., anti-spyware, firewall, parental controls, and intrusion detection) into it instead of being a small product incorporated into another. Pros: Like Cloudmark's software, Trend Micro is award-winning and comes highly recommended by "the big boys"; works with lots of email products and services. Cons: Windows-based only.

McAfee's SpamKiller and Symantec's Norton AntiSpam ([www.mcafee.com](http://www.mcafee.com), \$24.99 per year and [www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com), \$35.94 per year) can be purchased as a standalone product or, more intelligently, as part of a suite of products that normally include anti-virus, popup blockers, etc. These applications use the typical Bayesian (does it really matter what this means?) algorithm to rate messages on their spam qualities. A message that returns a higher quotient is identified as spam and is placed in your spam folder. Pros: As good as the others; integrated nicely with other products; automatic updates. Cons: does nothing to make it stand above or apart from other products; requires you to "train" the filter in order to increase efficiency.

OSpam.com (free online service) can be incorporated into any POP3-based email. The big difference with OSpam.com is that it intercepts all emails bound for your inbox – unless validated. Upon receiving a message from a \*new\* user, OSpam sends an email to the sender (while keeping your identity concealed). Upon acceptance of the OSpam terms, that user is added to your own "whitelist." Of course, you can add users or domains to the whitelist, too. Pros: Spam is drastically reduced and is held for your review. Cons: In order to review spam messages, you must login to OSpam.com; often confusing to the recipients of OSpam's automated response; may not appropriate for some.

**What about Mac-based products?** The number of products offered is minimal. Both OS X's Mail and Microsoft Entourage offer built-in spam filtering, but I'm not that happy with the service they provide. Here are two that have similar specs to their Windows-counterparts: C-Command's SpamSieve ([www.c-command.com](http://www.c-command.com), \$25) and Bains Software's SpamSweep ([www.bainsware.com](http://www.bainsware.com), \$25).

So, what's your move? Whatever it is, get used to spam. It's not going to change until the nature of email is overhauled or replaced. Need more? Visit [www.mprimesystems.com/spam](http://www.mprimesystems.com/spam).