

Why am I getting so much SPAM?

The number one reason by far why you're getting so much spam is undeniably: ***By giving out your email address***. 95% of the time, you've given your email address to somebody, somewhere, who has followed up with you directly or sold your information to another party (or both).

Here are some situations where you may have given out your email address:

- Signing up for free products or samples
- Trying to download free software programs
- Creating an account on a website
- Purchasing a product from an online company
- Posting your email into any kind of forum
 - This is a big one. Spammers check every forum on the internet and take every email address, knowing that it's likely valid.

Ok then, how do I stop it?

Once your email address is on a spammer's list, it can be mighty difficult to get the deluge of junk mail to stop. This is the type of issue that can spiral completely out of control if you don't work to stop it as soon as it starts happening.

Don't just delete or ignore spam!

Stemming the flow of incoming junk mail will require some work on your part. **The good news** is that after you've done the following steps over the course of a few weeks you should have a more manageable inbox going forward—especially if you pay attention to the pitfalls above and tips below to avoid spam from becoming a major issue again.

Unsubscribe – It is important to stop as many unwanted emails from the legitimate companies to begin to fix your overall issue. However, this is a double-edged sword, because if you click “unsubscribe” links in the body of emails from unscrupulous senders, you may do more harm than good (by confirming your email is a working address). So be careful with this step. Start by carefully looking at each email you receive, and if you recognize the company but don't want to receive their emails, go ahead and look for the “unsubscribe” or “opt-out” link at the bottom of the email. If you do this diligently for a few weeks, you'll reduce a great deal of the spam that you receive.

Mark emails as junk mail – For those emails that you cannot unsubscribe from or that appear to be sent by untrustworthy senders, use your email provider's tools to designate them as unwanted spam. This usually involves checking a box next to or right clicking each email and choosing the “mark as spam” or “report junk mail” option. These email senders will be saved to a list of “banned” email addresses, which you'll no longer receive messages from in your inbox. Like opting out, this requires some initial effort and diligence on your part, but it is usually quite effective once you've “trained” your filter.

Time for a new email address – This is the last resort, but it will be 100% effective at giving you a clean slate. If you are overwhelmed by spam, it may quite possibly be a step you'll need to take. Your old address will be set up with an auto-reply that will tell the sender that your email address has changed

and to contact you directly for the new one. This will ensure that only trusted contacts will get your address since they're the only people that can reach you outside of email.

Got it! Now how do I avoid it in the future?

1. **Don't give out your email address.** Obviously, you'll need to give out your email address for many legitimate reasons. But pay careful attention to all the examples listed in the first section ("So how did this happen?") and be very cautious about where you share your email address rather than giving it out indiscriminately.
2. **Have a "disposable" email account.** For those times when you can't be certain of the reputation of a website, it's a great idea to have a "disposable" email address (one dedicated exclusively to using when you can't be sure). Gmail and Yahoo offer free email services if you want a permanent "fake" address. If you want a "one-time-only" address, <https://www.guerrillamail.com/> offers a free, anonymous service that give you an email address that will expire in 60 minutes. There are other similar services as well, and all found via your favorite search engine.