

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month I'd like to follow up on my Spam Emails article from March of this year.

A few things have changed since March. One is that Microsoft has released Service Pack 2 for Windows XP and it contains a spam filter for Outlook Express and a built-in Popup blocker for Internet Explorer. Both of these features work well but are not perfect. So you may want to still use third-party programs in addition.

Another thing that has changed is better use of the Black Lists by the spam filtering programs. There are about 150 Black Lists on the internet that are used for filtering spam. Of these, about 25 of them are trusted and used by the most popular spam filters. Spam filtering programs periodically update their local Black List, so it is possible that some spam can still get through. Some internet service providers use their own Black Lists and therefore may filter the spam differently.

One note to remember is that if you're using Outlook 2003 you may have problems closing and reopening it if you use some of the spam filter programs. The cause of this is not known but the effect is that if you're using a spam filter such as Spam Subtract with Outlook 2003, it will not close properly and the only way to reopen Outlook 2003 is to reboot the computer.

I highly recommend using some type of spam filter. I'm using Outlook 2003 with its built-in filter. It works about ninety percent of the time. And those spam emails that get through I can easily let Outlook know to block future email from that sender. Now, I leave the spam it catches in a Junk E-mail folder which I review to make sure a real email wasn't tagged by mistake. If you get this happening you can add the email address to a White List so it doesn't happen again.

Here is a little bit of humor on spam. It has been suggested to counter spammer to change the way email is sent and received. Currently, when email is sent it makes its way over the internet until it reaches the email server that has your mailbox. The proposed change is to hold emails at the sender's email server and have email applications retrieve the email from these servers. That way a spammer will clog up the server where his mailbox and be more easily stopped. The problem with is that email server applications and email applications would need to be reprogrammed to handle this. But the kicker is that your email application would have to surf around the internet looking for your emails that may be at any of the hundreds of thousands of email servers. This alone may make email slower than snail mail! Great idea but not practical!

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer to, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.