**Spam: What is Spam?**

Receiving spam is a common complaint of many Internet users. In fact, spam email has become an increasingly bothersome problem as individuals spreading spam email find easier ways to invade users’ email accounts, leading to the necessity of such tools as [**spam filters**](http://www.spamlaws.com/spam-filters.html) and [**spam blocker**](http://www.spamlaws.com/spam-blocker.html) features.

But, while spam is on the rise, many Internet users still have limited knowledge as to what constitutes spam and what a spam email looks like. So what exactly is spam, how common is it, and what are some examples of common spam emails?

**What is Spam?**

The term spam refers to submitting the same message to a large group of individuals in an effort to force the message onto people who would otherwise choose not to receive this message.

There are two types of spam:

* **Cancelable usenet spam** refers to spam email in which a single message is sent to 2 or more usenet groups. This type of spam is directed at “lurkers”, or individuals who read newsgroups but who either do not or infrequently post or give their email addresses away. Cancelable usenet spam reduces the utility of newsgroups by forcing through advertising, and as such decreases the ability of administrators and managers of newsgroups to manage accepted topics. This spam is run at a low cost to those sending out spam.
* Email spam refers to spam email that is directed at individual users with direct addresses; email spam lists are usually created by scanning usenet postings, sterling Internet mailing lists or searching the Web for addresses. A variant of this form of spam is sent directly to mailing lists and email discussions that are used by public and private forums. Email spam costs individuals submitting spam email money; for example, ISPs and onine services need to pay to transmit spam directly to subscribers.

In addition, there are three main components to all types of spam:

* **anonymity:** the sender’s identity and address are concealed
* **mass mailing:** spam email is sent to a large number of recipients and in high quantities
* **unsolicited:** the individuals receiving spam would otherwise not have opted to receive it

Common forms of spam include commercial advertising, usually for dubious products, such as get-rich-quick schemes, quasi-legal services, political messages, chain letters and fake spam used to spread viruses.

**How Common is Spam?**

Spam is very common, with most if not all individuals receiving spam email at some point in their Internet-using lives.

However, the effectiveness of spam is not comparable. Only 14% of people read the spam they receive, with a mere 4% of individuals buying products from spam messages.