Four Tips To Help Protect Your Inbox From Spam ®

(NAPSA)—As Americans spend more time on the Internet, online scammers have redoubled their efforts to target unsuspecting e-mail users. Receiving unsolicited junk e-mail, also known as "spam," is an Internet headache we all wish we could get rid of by taking a couple of aspirin.

Spam e-mails not only clog up your inbox but can also be a disguise for "phishing" scams. "Phishers" send phony e-mails that appear to come from legitimate companies and attempt to trick individuals into revealing valuable personal data like passwords, credit card information and Social Security numbers.

"It's easy to see how anyone can fall prey to phishing scams since they are cleverly disguised as friendly e-mails from familiar names," says Heather Cabot, Yahoo! Web Life editor. In fact, according to a study by Gartner Research, 3.6 million adults in the U.S. lost $3.2 billion in 2007 as a result of phishing attacks. The number of victims of these scams increased 40 percent over the previous year.

"It's important to remember that we can easily help decrease the amount of spam we receive by reporting it," says Cabot. "Web mail service providers like Yahoo! can then monitor for future messages and catch and delete them before they ever appear in your inbox." The most effective way to report spam messages is by using the "This is Spam" button in your Web mail interface, such as in Yahoo! Mail. Clicking this button sends a strong signal to the antispam systems to block similar messages from appearing again.

Cabot suggests the following tips to help keep your e-mail inbox free of junk mail and protect you and your family from online scams:

1. Protect your e-mail address as you would your phone number.

Treat your e-mail address like your phone number—something you give out selectively and only to people you trust such as friends, family and people you know. Don't post it in public places like message boards or chat rooms. When you do need to supply an e-mail address for shopping or selling a car online, etc., use a service like Yahoo! Mail AddressGuard to create disposable e-mail addresses. If that disposable address starts to get spammed, you can delete it and create a new one.

2. Use the "Spam" button to report junk mail.

If you receive unwanted e-mail or e-mail from an address you don't recognize, report it by clicking on the "Spam" button in the toolbar at the top of your inbox or message. This will report the contents of the message to the antispam group so Yahoo! Mail (or your service provider) can watch out for similar messages in the future and, if warranted, automatically block them from reaching your inbox.

3. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Don't be fooled by people pretending to offer cash prizes, lost inheritances or magical pills that can cure all your problems. Legitimate companies would never send you information about a contest you didn't even enter and would never request sensitive personal information like a bank account number. And that prince who needs your help to smuggle a million dollars out of his country? Not gonna happen. Companies like Yahoo! are certainly working hard to keep these scams out of your mailbox, but a healthy dose of skepticism will go a long way.

4. Create a Sign-in Seal to avoid password theft.

Sign-in seals are a new safeguard offered by Yahoo! and many financial institutions to help protect your login experience. A sign-in seal is a secret message or image that you create to help protect your Yahoo! account from phishing. Go to any sign-in page across the Yahoo! network (such as Yahoo! Mail) and click "Prevent Password Theft" at the top of the sign-in box to create a personal Sign-in Seal on your computer.

To learn more about how you can protect yourself from online scams and use e-mail pain-free, visit http://antispam.yahoo.com. You can sign up for a Yahoo! Mail account and take advantage of e-mail safeguards at http://mail.yahoo.com.