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How to stop spam in Outlook: the filter on your computer and the one on the server

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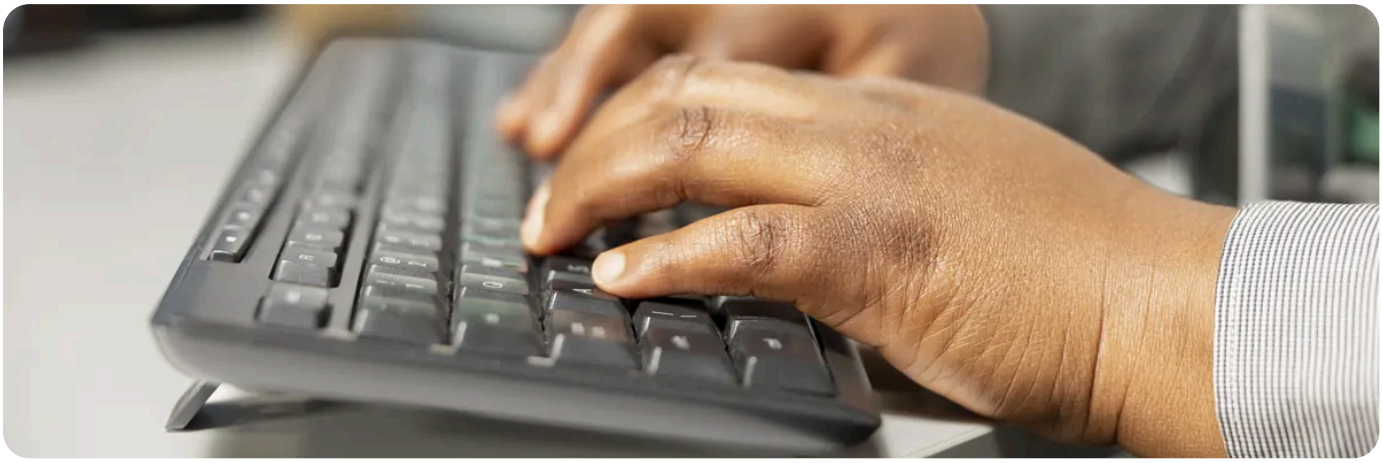
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How to stop spam in Outlook: the filter on your computer and the one on the server

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Outlook has a junk filter of its own, and that trips people up: there are **two barriers** running, in different places, and only one of them protects you on every device. Understanding the difference is half the job.

Where it runs	What that means for you
On the server, before it arrives	Analyses the message before delivering it. It covers Outlook, your phone and webmail - **all at once**
In Outlook, on your computer	Only acts after the message is downloaded, and only on **that computer**. On your phone, the same spam keeps arriving

Start from the right end:
Switching on the server filter pays off far more than any Outlook rule, because it cleans the mailbox everywhere at once. It is set out step by step in **how to stop spam reaching your mailbox**. After that, use Outlook for what is left.

In classic Outlook (2016, 2019, 2021 and Microsoft 365)

1. On the **Home** tab, click **Junk** and then **Junk E-mail Options**.
2. On the **Options** tab, choose the **Low** level. It is the right balance for a work mailbox: it catches the obvious without starting to hide messages from customers.
3. Under **Blocked Senders**, add the addresses that keep coming. If the nuisance always comes from the same domain, block the whole domain instead of chasing addresses one by one.

4. Under **Safe Senders**, add your customers, your accountant, your bank - and tick the option to also trust e-mail from your **Contacts**. That is what stops you losing important messages.

Do not choose "Safe Lists Only":
That level sends to junk **everything from anyone not already on your list**. In a business mailbox that means losing the first e-mail from every new customer - precisely the messages that matter most. And never enable the option to **permanently delete** junk: what it deletes goes to no folder at all.

In new Outlook and Outlook on the web

1. Open **Settings** (the gear icon) and go to **Mail → Junk email**.

2. Under **Blocked senders and domains**, add what you want stopped. Under **Safe senders and domains**, whatever must never go to junk.

3. For anything that repeats in different shapes, create a **rule** under **Mail → Rules** - by subject, by word, by domain.

The detail that catches people out with IMAP

Your account with us is IMAP, which means the folders live on the server and look the same everywhere. But **Outlook's rules and junk filter are not folders**: they are stored on that computer. Two practical consequences:

What you will notice	Why
Your phone keeps getting the spam	The rule you made in the office Outlook does not exist on the phone - only the server filter acts on both
Marking as junk in Outlook does not teach the server	It trains the local filter. To train the server one, move the message to the **Spam** folder from webmail
Reinstalling Windows wipes it all	Blocked senders and rules go with the installation. The server lists stay

Worth checking:
In your Outlook account settings, confirm that the junk folder points at the server's **Spam** folder rather than a local one. That way what goes to junk is the same on every device.

If one of our messages lands in junk

It happens with invoice notices and support replies. Add your brand's domain to **Safe Senders** and it goes away. If it is the other way round - *your* messages landing in other people's spam - that is a different subject, covered in **how to write an e-mail that does not land in spam**.

If Outlook is throwing errors rather than over-filtering, see **the most common Outlook errors** or **talk to us**.

NEED A HAND?

Outlook filtering not enough?

Talk to us →

SEE ALSO

- **How to stop spam reaching your mailbox: what we filter and what you can do**
- **How to write an e-mail that does not land in spam: behaviour, recipients and limits**
- **SPF, DKIM and DMARC: why your e-mail lands in spam**
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