Spam and Viruses

Question What is a Macro virus? Answer: A macro virus uses another application's macro programming language to distribute itself. They infect documents such as MS Word or MS Excel. Unlike other viruses, macro viruses do not infect programs or boot sectors - although a few do drop programs on the user's hard drive. The dropped files may infect executable programs or boot sectors.

Special note: Occasionally, you may get an "illegal operation" error when you try to start MS Word after cleaning a Word macro virus. If this happens, search for the file "normal.dot" and rename it to "normaldot.bak." MS Word will generate a new, clean "normal.dot" the next time it is started. This problem occurs because some viruses can leave harmless code residue that MS Word may be reading incorrectly, causing erratic behavior.

Question What is spam? Answer: Spam is the common term for unsolicited commercial email (UCE)—the Internet version of junk mail. "Spam" can also be a verb, used to describe the method of flooding the Internet with many copies of the same message.

The term "spam" has a negative connotation. In addition to being unsolicited and annoying, spam emails often include advertisements for dubious products, get-rich-quick schemes, or quasi-legal services.

Question Why do I get spam? Answer For the same reason you get junk mail through the Postal Service—people are trying to sell you things. Email is cheaper to send, so you get even more of it! Spam mailing lists are created in a variety of ways, including scanning Usenet discussion groups, buying or stealing Internet mailing lists, searching the Web for addresses, and even just guessing email addresses at random. If you use email, chances are you're going to get spam.

Question What is a Worm Virus? Answer: A computer worm is a self-contained program (or set of programs) that is able to spread functional copies of itself or its segments to other computer systems. The propagation usually takes place via network connections or email attachments.

Question How did my email address get on a spam list? Answer: There are many ways that spammers harvest and collect email addresses to build their lists. Although you need to be careful of where you leave your email address at Web sites, in newsgroup posts, and when chatting, sometimes you'll end up on a list without exposing your address whatsoever. It's common for spammers to guess at potentially valid addresses by taking a common username and adding valid domains to it. For example, chances are there will be a "bob@" at just about any provider's domain.
(Note: Remember — NEVER send a reply to a spammer with a remove request. This only confirms that your address is valid, and you'll probably get even more spam.)

Question What is a Trojan virus? Answer: A Trojan virus is a program that performs some unexpected or unauthorized (usually malicious) actions such as displaying messages, erasing files, or formatting a disk.

Question What is Phishing? Answer:

Phishing e-mails or attacks are fraudulent schemes that attempt to retrieve personal information (usernames, passwords, social security numbers, and financial information) from unsuspecting users. Generally, these e-mails look like they are from legitimate institutions asking the recipient to update their account information via links or file attachments included in the e-mail. Many times they have subtle discrepancies like misspelled words, improper logos, etc.
You can find out more about phishing here: http://www.antiphishing.org/

We strongly recommend never clicking on any of the links or open any attachments associated with one of these suspicious emails. In most cases deleting the message is the safest thing to do. Please make sure it is deleted from your deleted items folder(s).