You've Won a Prize!

Essential Question: What is spam, and what can you do about it?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: Students learn what spam is, the forms it takes, and then identify strategies for dealing with it.

Students compare junk mail to spam, learn tips for handling spam safely, and then use those tips to answer questions on the **Is It True? Student Handout** about a boy who receives spam. Students finish by making their own songs about how to deal with spam, using tips from the **Is It True? Student Handout**.

objectives

Students will:

- Learn what spam is, and what forms it takes
- Explore strategies for safely managing unwanted messages
- Demonstrate that they know how to spot spam

Materials and Preparation

Materials

- **Is It True? Student Handout**

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Preparation

- Copy the **Is It True? Student Handout**, one for every student
- Bring in several pieces of junk mail
- Review GarageBand or download the free online version of Audacity (www.audacity.sourceforge.net) for the Spam Stoppers song, and review Glogster (www.glogster.com) or get poster board and markers for the Extension Activity

Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Security for Elementary Students Parent Tip Sheet**

Key Vocabulary

- **Spam:** Unwanted email messages or IMs that the user did not ask for
- **Computer Virus:** A software program that can damage other programs on the computer
- **Strategy:** An action plan

teaching plans

Introduce

Prior to the class session, bring in several pieces of junk mail that have been opened. Spread the mail around the room and ask students to browse through it. Have some of the students read the major headline to the class. POINT OUT that you did not ask for this mail.

Present the following scenario to students: Kathy loves coming home from school and picking up the mail. She always checks to see if anything has arrived for her. Usually, all the mail is for her parents. Her parents throw most of the mail in the recycling bin, calling it "junk mail."

ASK *What is junk mail?* (Guide students to understand that junk mail is unwanted mail that no one sent away for in the first place.)

Teach 1: Too Good to Be True?

DISTRIBUTE the **Is It True? Student Handout** and have students write answers to the questions individually.

GUIDE students to consider the following in their discussion when they are finished:

1. **What do you think Charlie thought when he got this email?** *(Charlie may have thought it was from a friend or relative whose email address he did not know.)*

2. **Why do you think Charlie opened the email?** *(He was probably curious and did not consider that anything bad could happen.)*

3. **Was it a good idea to click on the Web link? Why or why not?** *(Since Charlie was confused about the source of the email, he should not have clicked on the link.)*

4. **What should Charlie do next?** *(Charlie should have told a parent or guardian about the email, especially after he clicked on the link.)*

EXPLAIN to students that adults who use the Internet will understand the problems associated with spam and will know what to do about it. Let them know that if the adults in their life don't know very much about computers, they should find a teacher or trusted adult who does.

DISCUSS with students that the email sent to Charlie was probably sent to thousands of other people too. The sender was probably a company trying to sell something. The sender wanted Charlie to click on the link and see the ads, tricking him into it by telling him that he won a prize.

EXPLAIN that this kind of unwanted email message is called "spam." It's just like junk mail. Sometimes spam messages may address you by name – just like junk mail is addressed to your name, or your parent's name. Don't let this confuse you. The company's computer is simply inserting your name automatically in a message that thousands of people get. Spam can also cause computer viruses.

ASK *Have you ever received spam? If so, what did you do? How did you know it was spam?* (Guide students to understand that the purpose of spam is to get someone to read the message, and the subject line is designed to trick you into opening it.)

common sense
media

DISCUSS with students that spam can be annoying or upsetting to adults as well as children. It can also be harmful to your computer, infecting it with viruses. Remind them that Kathy's parents get rid of junk mail without opening it. Spam is Internet junk mail, and they should treat it the same way. POINT OUT that opening a spam message will automatically signal the sender that their message has reached its audience, and the spammer will keep sending you more junk emails. So the best strategy is not to open email from addresses you don't recognize. Just trash it.

EXPLAIN that there are important tips kids can follow so they do not fall for spammers' tricks.

Spam Stoppers Tips:

- Don't open messages from people you don't know.

- If you open a message by mistake, don't click on links or download files that come with it.

- Never reply to emails or IMs from people you don't know.

- Don't reply to spam, even to tell the spammer not to send any more messages.

- Watch out for messages that ask for your private information. No one should ever do that. Do not reply or click on links.

- Tell an adult you trust about any message that makes you uncomfortable or comes from someone you don't know.

Teach 2: Spam Stoppers Song

PLACE students in groups of four. Each group should create a song called "Spam Stoppers." The song should incorporate the spam stoppers tips from the **Is It True? Student Handout**. GUIDE students to create the lyrics using the following song structure: Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus.

For a high-tech option, have students create their songs using GarageBand or record their song on Audacity, a free online program that allows you to record, edit, and mix music. You can download Audacity at: www.audacity.sourceforge.net.

ENCOURAGE students to play their songs for one another when they finish.

Wrap Up and Assess

You can use the "Spam Stopper" songs to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK

- *What are some ways kids can enjoy email and IM? (They can use email to keep in touch with teachers or family members who do not use IM. They can use IM to keep in touch with other family members and friends.)*

- *What is spam? (Unsolicited email or IMs from companies or other groups, usually trying to sell something.)*

- *What is the safe thing to do if you get an email or IM from a stranger? (Do not open it; if you do open it in error, don't click on anything or download any attached file.)*
- *What should you do if an email or IM makes you feel uncomfortable? (Do not reply; tell a parent or guardian.)*

REMIND students that they can use email and IM to keep in touch with teachers, family members, and friends. They should just be cautious about spam. REITERATE that they can protect themselves from spam by following the tips.

Extension Activity

Have students design their own posters to educate younger students in second grade about how to identify and deal with spam. They can use www.glogster.com to make their posters, or use markers and poster board.

Homework

Students share their "Spam Stoppers" songs with their parents and educate their parents about what spam is and how to avoid it.

Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students© 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

2. Communication and Collaboration
   b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats

5. Digital Citizenship
   a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
   b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity

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DIGITAL LITERACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN A CONNECTED CULTURE
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