

## Jaguar's Spam Filters

Apple's latest email program can help stop unwanted deliveries to your in box.

By Roman Loyola

Apple's email program that comes with Mac OS X, called Mail, is often eschewed for mail programs that have more features. Fortunately, the updated Mail program that's available with Jaguar has many new features, including a spam-filtering service that can help ease the load in your in box. On today's show Leo demonstrates Mail's spam-filtering feature and shows you how to use it effectively.

### Train the spam sieve

Mail's spam filtering is based on what Apple calls "adaptive latent semantic analysis." In plain English, Mail determines what is and isn't spam based on the content of the email you receive. Mail takes the email that you've designated as spam, identifies patterns of content within that email, and uses this analysis to identify spam in future email. (If you're interested in learning more about adaptive latent semantic analysis, read this [University of Colorado paper](#).)

The key to Mail's filtering success is proper "training." When you first launch the new version of Mail, the spam feature is essentially blank. It has no definition of spam. You need to train the application to be able to correctly identify spam.

### How to train Mail's spam filter

The beauty of Mail's complex spam filter is that it's very easy to train and use. By default, the filter is set to its Training option. Here's how you access the spam-filter option:

1. Launch Mail. Click the Mail menu and point to Junk Mail.
2. A pop-up menu should appear. If you haven't modified it, it will be set to Training .

In Training mode, Mail is learning to define spam. When you get spam in your in box, you tell Mail about the email by selecting it and then pressing the Junk button. Mail then uses that offending email as part of its definition of spam, and identifies it as spam by using a color code. As you select more email as spam, the definition grows and Mail gets better at identifying spam.

If you get an email that's incorrectly identified as spam, all you have to do is select the email and then click the Not Junk button. Mail will then create a definition in its filter to designate future email like this one as not spam.

### Mail's spam filter goes automatic

Once you've decided that Mail has been a good student and is done training, you can set the spam filter to Automatic. Here's how you switch to Automatic mode:

1. Click the Mail menu and point to Junk Mail.
2. A pop-up menu should appear. Select Automatic.

In Automatic mode, Mail automatically moves email that fits the spam criteria into the Junk box.

Make sure you keep it in Training mode for a while to build a robust definition of spam. That way, when you switch to Automatic you won't lose "real" email to your Junk folder.

You can inspect your Junk folder to see if an important email was erroneously marked as spam. Select the message and then click the Not Junk button.