

FLAKES AND BOTS OF CRAIGSLIST

dal **you're still missing it...**
 < OlderNBolder >

Yes, specifically the classifieds and personals. I don't see any 'bot posts in the forums. Lots of junk, but that's just people that don't know where to post. arniflora: All of the USA posts are on the server in San Francisco. "Dallas" is just a text variable/field that's entered in with the post, it's not a separate location on the server(s), as far as I can see from here. CraigsList.ca also maps to the San Francisco server(s). I didn't check any further. I'd suspect that everything CraigsList is here. There aren't hundreds of sites, there's only this one server(s) in SF. Try it yourself: yougetsignal.com/tools/visual-tracert/. As to whether it scales to millions of posts per day, if you eliminate half of the posts (the spam ones), then the CPU load is lessened. Doing it the way I did, it happens **BEFORE** the insert into our SQL database; it simply disappears. That's quite a bit of code that doesn't have to execute with each spam post. I don't have a clue what CL is written in.

sac **the issue is about local in-person**

< MyThreeCents >

face-to-face transactions which is what CL is founded on. Once you start being able to search 25+ cities away that is gone. Plus the amount of scams is greater. Right now CL warns people to only deal locally, and NOT to deal with anyone outside of their area. So while I understand your linear thinking and why you might need it, what you are suggesting ultimately turns CL into a suedo ‘eBay’ and much more fraud. You also have to consider this from a sellers perspective. I know when I list something for sale, I want to deal with someone who is local, who can easily come over, take a look at it and buy it. Not have to deal with someone hours away who may or may not show up. There are enough flakes already on CL who are just no-shows, but doing something from that far away would also appear to create more people, and just traffic or being held up, not getting there to our agreed meeting time and place, etc.

atl **I’m still serious.**

< HelpfulHedda >

You alleged buyer abuse. You have to define the kind of abuse, and then deal with it according to what it is. I don’t see how any buyer can abuse CL other than by sending fake email inquiries to ads or scraping data from CL somehow. If your complaint is about flakes who don’t keep appointments, or jerks who write obscenities in email, or..., or..., you have to be specific. I notice what I feel to be a whole in their systems And it’s not a “whole,” if you’re being serious. If there is no complaint, there is no problem and thus no need to fix what ain’t broke. If you want to write a Buyer’s Code of Conduct for CL, and submit it, that would be one way to show you’re serious.

atl **You got a serious reply, or two.**

< HelpfulHedda >

You’re being unserious, writing hot air as if serious. “There should be a way to report ABUSIVE buyers so they are no longer able to use Craigslist.” You have to define the kind of abuse, and then deal with it according to what it is. “I don’t see how any buyer can abuse CL other than by sending fake email inquiries to ads or scraping data from CL somehow. If your complaint is about flakes who don’t keep appointments,

cbg **I've tried help, and contacting it's self.**

< Chazz2323 >

Please Fix the personals sections in the PA area. (Maybe as a whole.) These sections have been overran by scam and spam bots for years now and like the title says I've tried help and contacting directly. Some captcha system would help eliminate the bots for the most part. Real people want to meet but few do because of this rampant problem. Please do something
Thanks, chazz2323(

pdx **"Bots" are flagging ads**

< NyanCat >

real people are flagging the ads. IF the category/site was full of spam, CL might be imposing a flush that makes the 99 hooker/scam/spam/rude/man-order ads much easier to remove. As a side effect, it also makes the 1 legitimate ad from a real woman easier to remove, too.

sfo **Perhaps**

< Nyancat >

craigslist has much more sensitive rate-limiting and/or bot detection on the "contact" urls. While real people may view MANY ads, they usually only access the contact info to reply to SOME of them. Bots would of course access the contact info for every ad.

--- **Clarification**

< muskegon2013 >

My apologies if I wasn't clear before - I did not mean to imply that I do not wish to provide a phone number for people to contact me by; in fact, I would like to allow legitimate buyers to contact me by telephone if they would like to do so. Now, when you say that embedding a phone number into an image "prevents the site/readers from filtering ads...", you are wrong; there is no way to filter based on phone number. I just checked. Also, it does not interfere with any forms of moderation. Also also, calling helpful members of the community trolls is trollish ;-). [insert "bell of shame" sound effect here] And could you clarify what you mean when you say "Good luck with your spammy technique of hiding your number from the filters?" I don't have anything like that and am not hiding anything from anyone except spambots. Furthermore, when you say

or jerks who write obscenities in email, or..., or..., you have to be specific.” Turn off your hot air machine, if you want to offer constructive criticism.

cle **It’s difficult to make money**

< HelpfulHedda >

Yes, I believe that it generally is. And CL wasn’t meant for dealers or resellers who want to make money. However, your post portrays you as foolish and arrogant, a bad combo for a dealer or reseller anywhere. Ignore and/or flag lo-ballers and flakes. Use more common sense than your post displays, when dealing with strangers.

inl **TO CL Staff...**

< Silverballer >

Soon, maybe you will realize what happens when you REQUIRE users to utilize PUBLIC Help through ads and harass sellers with no intent to buy anything and then you have foreigners who try Forums for assistance. This was my first time utilizing your PUBLIC Help Forums. Ever since I to get your email directly because they don’t want to use craigslist email method, this people want utilized your PUBLIC “Flag Help & FeFo Forums,” my email inbox has been getting flooded by your number but wont provide theirs . I don’t think I will be posting to sell anything any further inquiries from CL flakes, (who all have anonymous emails, of course), & now, there is a group who beyond today nor looking to buy, this site is not reputable any more. It’s difficult to make money are chasing my ads & flagging them off, & also flooding my email inbox with the SAME NOTE when dummies are constantly ruining the experience by pretending to want to by and then asking directed at all my ads FROM DIFFERENT ANONYMOUS EMAIL ADDRESSES, so I have for an address then never showing up. I think there should be a law to throw dummies like that in removed my remaining ads before they also got flagged off & my email inbox bombarded with jail and habitual offenders should get the death penalty It’s always a few bad apples that ruing it for even more harassing notes. There is obviously a team of flaming flaky moron assistants working everyone I’m done... I wont ever post or use this site again This site is flourishing with criminal your Flag Help & FeFo Forums, & when they encounter someone they don’t like, or

that craigslist “protects your number from being ‘scraped’ by providing a javascript wall,” the question becomes how well.

--- **I don’t care**

< muskegon2013 >

It doesn’t make any difference. The terms of use as they are written right now are senseless. Why can’t the rest of us protect our phone numbers from bots? Also, tell me where to find these were in the past) do not prohibit my ability to protect my privacy from bots. Maybe you’re one of those people who thinks that nobody should have the privilege of freedom from nonstop telemarketers and spam, but it sure would be nice to be able to minimize any unnecessary exposure while still allowing serious buyers to inquire by telephone about items I have listed for sale.

--- **I don’t care**

< muskegon2013 >

I don’t care; I want people who click on the reply button to know that they can contact by voice, SMS, or email, and that they can check the images for a phone number. I don’t like putting it in that field because of the risk of bots getting ahold of it.

--- **Has nothing to do with “bypassing moderation”**

< muskegon2013 >

This has nothing to do with “bypassing moderation” and everything to do with protecting one’s own privacy from bots however.

--- **How secure?**

< muskegon2013 >

Actually, I wouldn’t be totally opposed to using it if that is indeed the case. Is it visible in the page’s source or is it totally obscured from bots?

bos **Super frustrated posting personals**

< FrustratedHedonist >

Four related issues: 1. I’ve long had a problem with posting casual hookup posting using my account. They often take a day to post or don’t post at all even though they say they are live. If they do post, when they go like they are in chronological

who disagrees activity, theft, prostitution, murderers, liars... I am surprised that the site is still functional Take care with their views, they team up & clutter your inbox & flag your ads off.”

phx **\$25 or less**

< mandasl >

There are tons of ads offering free animals. If you are trying to rehome a beloved pet, put that there is a fee that is negotiable or waived depending on the circumstances and outcome of a home visit. This will weed out the jerks who just want a free animal but it doesn't make you look like you care more about money than finding a suitable place for your dog or cat. Asking for money doesn't guarantee your pet a good home. Asking the potential adopter a lot of questions and possibly visiting their home to check it out is the best way to get your animal into a good new place. I have rehomed stray cats and dogs and have used Craigslist and I can tell you there are a lot of flakes, hoarders, and people who write stuff like “our last dog was hit by a car, kids heartbroken, looking for free dog.” Next! I am very proud of finding 4 good homes for stray dogs using Craigslist, but it took a while to find the new perfect match.

sea **Add COMMENTS to Ads to Control Quality**

< christoofar >

Too many flakes and too many scams in the ads these days. ex. Guy hired me to move a pile of dirt. Said it would take about 4 hours and he would supply all equipment. Got there and he had about 10 yards and only provided a short narrow shovel and no wheelbarrow! When I told him I couldn't do it with that, he accused ME of being “another Craigslist flake.” Another time I responded to a job ad and the address didn't exist! I see many job ads that are illegal as well. Being able to enter comments on the ads would prevent others from being victimized. Or, barring that, how about some additional flags? Such as “flake” and “scam” and “nutjob?”

okc **buyer and seller over the years**

< HelpfulHedda >

never had anyone lining up to buy my stuff, usually posted 2-3 or more ads over several weeks to get a sale. I'd like to say the pricing to sell moves things more quickly but sometimes

order based on when I posted not when they went live, so they're so far down the list no one sees them. Defeats the purpose of having an account. 2. Posts often don't post to the category (i.e., MWM) that is selected. They only go to the main Casual Encounters. 3. I consistently get blocked. I am looking for more than one type of person. So, I want to post a few different ads. They system won't let me even if they have different content, different pics, and different titles. That's crap! 4. For all the trouble I have posting, seems like fakers/bots can get through easily. I suggest requiring a City, Zip, and Age. The fakes usually don't have them or use the general location category. That would save us lots of time sorting.

--- **Interesting Idea**

< Jambo 11 >

Obviously, bots can't listen, but I would imagine that there's still a warm body running the bots. The living, breathing scammers are something else. Indeed, some of the scam listings are posted by actual people, though I am using the term "people" rather loosely, in regards to them. Hopefully, they would pay no mind to the comments posted by the flaggers. Then again, I've tried educating them when they email me, but they still haven't changed their tactics.

dal **Two levels of problem**

< HelpfulHedda >

"largely from scam bots" How hard is it to flag the emails? Do you have so many ads and inquiries about them that it would take even one (5, 30...) minute(s) per day to open and flag the obvious bait emails? Are you getting ongoing trash texts from an older ad with your number in it, or is the problem simply the load of initial bait texts?

dal **Please Add More Filters**

< hardtrainer1980 >

Could CL PLEASE add more filters for when placing ads to weed out all the spammers and bots???? Would make the CL experience a whole lot better. Especially in the Casual Encounters area. Other than that I love CL.

I have raised the asking price 50% and got a “no questions asked” sale from the new ad with zero serious interest before that. That policy was true before this handle and in the past couple of years, too; asking prices roughly \$15-300 range. As a buyer I’ve recently (past 2 years?) found sellers to be odd or unmotivated. But I’m not a high volume buyer or seller so my anecdotes are not significant on their own for stats impressions. As a seller I have had very few flaky or spam responses to my ads. Two different issues: Spam inquiries/ads and legit interest. I’ve had minor flakes in the old past and in the past year.

srq **This may be very difficult to believe**

< New0wl >

given your narcissism, but your “perfect” craigslist ad is not perfect at all—you community dislikes it enough to flag it off. This doesn’t mean that your ad wasn’t unfairly flagged off by “losers.” it may very well have been. This definitely happens. But that is what you have to work with: writing an ad that satisfies the losers enough so they’ll leave it alone. I find it isn’t worth the effort. I just use some other site with fewer losers or where I am not vulnerable to them. Just the qualities of the replies I get to an ad tell me just how many flakes and assorted losers are out there. After throwing out the scammers, i’ve still got 95% or better no-shows, lowballers and other flakes. it’s always an unexpected delight to have a good deal come together. But again, this is the craigslist community. You cannot control it. The fact that these same people vote in municipal elections is the scary part.

bos **but if it is a common item**

< Too_Much_Cake >

and there are many out there, the bigger market drives prices down and the sellers get hurt—and have to ship. I don’t have a total beef with shipping. I’ve done two shipping deals. One was for a totally obscure, rare, and sorta pricey item. I was contacted by someone from far away, they were willing to pay full price + shipping (half again the full price) and front everything in cash (take all risk). I went for it. The item was so unusual—old PLC gear—that only a few people in the country might be interested. It was worth my while to go through the considerable shipping hassle to make the deal. The other time

--- **An Open Letter to Craig Newmark**

< w7L >

It has been more than 15 years since I made my first post on CL and a lot has changed since then. Rather than making this a long, drawn-out letter I would simply like to get to the point and ask you was it really your intention when you built this marketplace to have certain business-related sections run by people with auto-flagging software? Was it your intention to have the every day Joe be left defenseless to these bad actors? And finally, why for Heaven's sake after all these years are the postings still free? You have spent so much time refining this empire of yours, why not just make everyone pay a small fee for their ads and eliminate the community flagging altogether using part of the funds to monitor the users who violate the TOU? What you have done is ultimately told us you could give a shit less who is being flagged with your new TOU and left us to fend for ourselves. Are you or your team behind the development of this.

snj **That's no help**

< SilverSurferNJ >

I know how to reply. The keyboard tuff guys reply using ads to harass people. I highly doubt they would come to the forums to discuss. I know now it's just a mute issue obviously this site will just continue to become filled with degenerates. I guess I will just except it and stop posting and quietly sit in the background as this site becomes more useless and far away from which it was intended. It's just a playground now, no need for sections because it's the same all over the site. You have spam, bots, and keyboard tuff guys mixed with the rapists and murderers. It's just one big toilet filled with a bunch of smelly turds never to be flushed.

jax **I can't flag effectively. It serves no purpose.**

< glennalperin >

Text message, just now to my phone. How should I flag that one? IDENTICAL responses to my ads, both subject and body in email, or just body in text message. If I flag ten of those, shouldn't craigslist see a pattern? (I have flagged far more than 10.) Spammers and bots can create a million random email accounts and text messages very quickly. (Yahoo and gmail and many others give them away for nothing.) Clicking "flag"

was for a trivial, common, and cheap item. The buyer was actually on my own site but 40 miles away (bay area is BIG). It was cheaper for a flat rate envelope then driving down to get it. Again, they were willing to front cash and take all risks and the shipping was simple. I was sick of all the flakes on the thing and was happy to see it gone.

sfo **I am surprised you have not noticed...**

< MyRedHandle >

...the “nearby results.” Here’s how it works.... If you search out “used toaster” and your site has few, you will get results at the bottom from nearby sites. When you don’t see nearby results, that means there are many used toasters on your site that are available. I am not sure how few “used toasters” are needed to trigger the nearby results, and quite frankly I don’t think it matters much. You want to connect with nonlocal folks, please just go visit there site. Bigger hint here.... When I sell stuff, I have on occasion been contacted from people not local, but nearby. Those people have a higher percentage of no-show flakes than my local community. Even if I respond and set times and what not, I sorta write them off. After all, who wants to drive hours for my used toaster?

prv **Don’t think I’ve responded to any spam yet.**

< RollingStoned >

Bit hard to tell as I don’t get spam. If it looks iffy and I’m very interested, I do use the “throwaway.” The reprinted-real-ad-to-make-a-fake-ad was a problem in the personals for awhile but I never saw it anywhere else and it seems to have dried up. Don’t know why. Maybe there is a hash of every ad worldwide and there is some dupe checking going on to knock out out-of-area duplicates. If this was going on (still) I would expect it in categories that draw huge responses—W4M and For Sale/Free. But the spammers don’t want to collect phone numbers, they want email addresses to fill lists they can then sell. In some cases they are running auto-reply spam games to “fake” ads. But people go back and flag the fake ad so they don’t last long. My ad content always mentions my location. You would have to manually edit it to use it as a fake. Too much trouble for scammers just to get my splendid and authentic writing style. But like I said, asking for a number and deleting.

is a waste of time=money. What is craigslist doing to honor my time? Does it even care about me or my time? “Craigslist isn’t for everybody.” True. The bots and spammers love it. Clearly. It is for them.

jax **Then perhaps Craigslist itself should change.**
 < glennalperin >

Why allow spammers and bots to respond to my ads in such a way that even placing ads at all is a waste of my time? My ads all generated a 95% response rate from spammers and bots. Does craigslist have a problem with create-and-dump email bots responding to my posts with the exact same scam message? Every time I report one, ten more are created. If I am going to stop using craigslist, it will be because of it’s utter lack of usefulness to me, policies aside. Business doesn’t run effectively if I am only getting telemarketers responding with the sole purpose of asking for my bank account information. What to do? What to do? There is a larger problem here. Since my fixing it independently so that I don’t have to waste valuable time=money because craigslist hasn’t figured out a way to solve a problem I, and others I am sure, are trying to circumvent, Oh, never mind. Never mind. Logic has no place on craigslist either, TOU or not. The bots have won.

bos **Alas, I am doing no such thing.**
 < glennalperin >

People, not 10 bots per bots offering me the opportunity to provide my bank account information, are my target audience. I do not track these posts, nor how many people click on them. People provide me only with contact information which I use only to contact them because they are requesting me to do so. Collecting information? Aren’t we all trying to get responses to our ads? If somebody responds directly to our legitimate ads, aren’t we, by definition, “collecting information?” While it may be true that the company hosting my web site may be tracking the number of visitors and where they come from, I have no influence on that, nor do I even care if they do. That information, even if I had access to it, would be useless drivel to me. Is that company breaking craigslist TOU? If so, and I have no control or it, am I, by extension, also in violation? Thank you again for your clarity on this issue.

aug **the less information the better!**

< CLRMoma >

I have actually found that the less I include in the content of the ad the better chance I have of the ad staying up. The last time I posted, and included all relevant details and a description as well as wants and needs, the ad was up for 30 min...long enough to get 5 replies. Then I posted an ad that just said “category says it all...email me for more details.” That one made it for 12 hours before someone flagged it! I understand there are a lot of fakes and flakes on CL, but for legitimate posters, the system screws us, and frustrates me to the point of wanting to find an alternate site.

cht **Why did I see that coming?**

< noh_body >

sure enough, you used the e-word. In general, introducing anything that makes craigslist more like eBarf is going to hit resistance. You’re correct, eBay is getting pretty explicit about discouraging low volume sellers. By the end of October’s round of rule changes several categories will demand you have enough volume to sustain shipping losses, all categories will require that you have the volume to cover credit card expenses and losses as well as damage from various flakes and nuts. The days of eBay being any kind of place to sell off some of the junk in your garage are well over. The other auctions sites aren’t a lot better. Same entrepreneur juniors stuffing the categories with 20 listings for the same crap. It’s like the guys under the big awnings at the fleece market. Bins and bins of Commercial Chinese garbage, all the same. The good stuff is at the mom ‘n’ pop tables in the back—the people that maybe come out once a year with their own junk.

orl **Yeah I love craigslist too**

< sequiter >

Of course with a free site you always get your share of losers and flakes, but overall, for me, it’s been okay if not “average.”