

Protecting your PC from Spyware & Viruses

What is Spyware?

Spyware can be defined as a broad category of malicious software, or malware, intended to intercept or take partial control of a computer's operation without the user's informed consent.

Spyware frequently attempts to remain unnoticed either by actively hiding or by simply not making its presence on a system known to the user. Spyware can be downloaded from Web sites (typically in shareware or freeware), email and instant messages. Additionally, a user may unknowingly receive and/or trigger spyware by accepting an End User License Agreement from a software program linked to the spyware or from visiting a website that downloads the spyware with or without an End User License Agreement. *(Information provided by Symantec)*

What are the symptoms of Spyware?

- ◆ Decrease in the computer's overall functionality
- ◆ Programs running slowly, freezing or crashing
- ◆ Lots of annoying pop-up advertisements
- ◆ Unwanted redirects of your web browser
- ◆ Strange icons/programs on your desktop
- ◆ Additional toolbars you did not purposefully install
- ◆ FYI, viruses come packaged with loads of spyware. If you're experiencing a very serious spyware infection, there's a good chance your PC has a virus!



How do I remove malware from my computer?

- ◆ **Make sure you have one updated anti-virus program** (multiple programs conflict with each other). If you're on the Emerson network, visit rx.emerson.edu to obtain your free copy of Symantec anti-virus. Remember to use this program to scan files before downloading them!
- ◆ If you think your computer has a virus, **try running an anti-virus scan in Safe Mode** (that way, only essential programs will run - i.e. not viruses). Just tap the F8 key as the computer boots up and select "Safe Mode" when prompted. Be sure to delete the files it quarantines!
- ◆ Go ahead and **turn off System Restore**. If your PC is in rough shape, this feature essentially functions as a virus-restore, which you clearly don't want. To turn off System Restore, right-click on My Computer and go to Properties. Choose the System Restore tab, and check the box next to "Turn off System Restore."
- ◆ **Routinely clean out your Temp, Cookies, and Temporary Internet File folders**. These are spyware's favorite places to hang out. Just download CCleaner and it will do it for you! (www.ccleaner.com)
- ◆ **You can remove a good deal of spyware and adware from your computer by using free programs available on the web**. The IT Help Desk recommends using *Ewido Security Suite*, *Spybot: Search and Destroy*, and *Ad-Aware SE Personal*. More advanced users may want to use *Hijack This* as well (please use it carefully). **You can obtain these program from safe sites like download.com or majorgeeks.com**. That way, you don't have to worry about downloading anything that may be malignant.

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How can I prevent this from happening again?

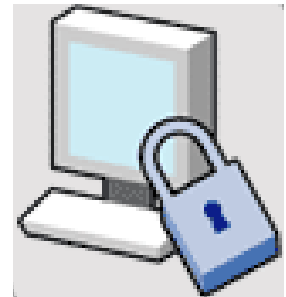
◆ **Always make sure your computer is equipped with the latest Windows Updates.** This is the only way your PC is truly protected from the latest security threats. Don't forget to turn on Automatic Updates (located in Control Panel). By doing so, Windows will download your Critical Updates for you, and notify you when they are ready to be installed.

◆ When surfing the web, **try using Firefox instead of Internet Explorer.** Firefox is a more secure browser, with a built-in pop-up blocker and fewer security loopholes than IE. Just visit www.getfirefox.com to download it.

◆ **Never click on pop-ups or flashing advertisements. Ever.** This is the easiest way to get a wealth of irritating spyware. Remember, if you want to close a pop-up windows, be sure not to click on anything besides the X in the upper right-hand corner. Sometimes, the pop-up window will appear in the taskbar as well. In this case, you can also right-click on the taskbar and select "X Close."

◆ **Advertising-supported adult-themed websites contain extremely high amounts of spyware.** Let's just say nothing is really free! Exercise common sense caution while surfing the web.

◆ **Stealing software applications is not only illegal, but also an excellent way to obtain extremely harmful viruses and worms.** Peer-to-peer networks are typically riddled with spyware and viruses. Remember, just because a file is called "photoshop.exe," for example, doesn't necessarily mean it is. Besides, **there are free software alternatives to popular programs like Photoshop, Office and Dreamweaver!** There's no reason to do something illegal that may compromise your computer's safety.



Free, safe and legal shareware programs:

◆ Office Alternatives:

Open Office (openoffice.org)
AbiWord (abisource.com)
Writely (writely.com)
Num Sum (numsum.com)

◆ Photoshop Alternative:

GIMP (gimp.org)

◆ Dreamweaver Alternative:

Nvu (nvu.com)

◆ Basic Video Editing Alternative:

Avid Free DV (avid.com/freedv)

◆ Music:

www.opsound.org
www.cmixer.org
www.creativecommons.org/audio

◆ Video:

www.archive/details/prelinger
www.archive.org/details/open_source
www.channel4.com/learning/microsites/l/ideasfactory/pixnmix/candy_jar.html

