

COMPUTER TROUBLESHOOTERS



Global NEWS

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Spyware: What, Where, When, How and Why

There is a good chance you have heard of the terms “spyware”, “adware”, “malware” or other similarities, but do you know what this actually is and what it does? The best way to protect yourself from something is to know what it is, and where it comes from!

What? Spyware is a category of malicious software that uses a part of your computer without your knowledge, and without your permission. Typically, this is to send information about what you do (whether it is what keys you type or what you go and see) to online companies. Spyware is not a virus. It is not put there to destroy your computer, simply to use it to gain information. Spyware is sometimes illegal, and often against privacy laws.

Where? Spyware either comes from the internet or from a freeware program you (generally) have downloaded. Be wary of toolbars or search assistants for your web browsers, as the majority of these contain spyware. Pop-ups and some websites also create spyware 'cookies' on your PC. But, the easiest way to get spyware on your PC is to install it. Many free programs contain 3rd party software which is most often spyware (Kazaa, for example) and seems hidden from view until the effects kick in.

When? Spyware can hit you anytime you are surfing the net or when you are installing a downloaded program. Spyware must utilize the internet to send its information out, so the only way to be truly safe is to not have an internet connection, but these days an internet connection is considered essential. In saying this though, there are ways to reduce spyware threats so that you are protected.

How? Spyware affects you in different ways.



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Spyware uses your internet connection and your computer to send information to others. Because it is doing this, you will find a substantial decrease in your PC's performance, system crashes or hangs and sluggish internet. It is not uncommon to find a single PC infected with thousands of spyware programs, which leads to a significant drop in performance. Also, certain types of spyware will override your web browser's homepage, or 'hijack' links to major websites, such as eBay. This makes you even more vulnerable, as every time you begin to surf the web, your PC is pumped with more spyware.

Why? Spyware was not created as a joke, an annoyance or as a destructive force, instead it was created to gain advertising companies a huge amount of money. It can result in the dispersing of spam to a lot of people from just monitoring one PC.

The way to get rid of spyware is to use anti-spyware programs such as Ad-Aware, Spybot, Spysweeper, Counter Spy or many others. To be fully protected, you must also use a range of spyware scanners. Single spyware scanners don't pick up everything, and using a range of scanners broadens the search spectrum therefore removing more unwanted spyware. Sometimes spyware attaches itself to system software and can be difficult to remove. Many people are turning to Mozilla Firefox as an alternative to Internet Explorer, as it is less targeted for spyware, and you get fewer intrusions.

If you want to totally avoid spyware don't use the internet. But, for the best protection possible, contact your local Computer Troubleshooter.

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Buying, Selling, Donating Used Computers

So, You've got a new computer but what should you do with the old one once you have gotten all your data and files off. Can you sell it on eBay? Put an Ad in the paper? Can you donate the computer to a charity? Is buying a computer on eBay a good deal? The answer to these question is of course you can. When customers ask us questions about selling and donating a PC the most frequent question we get is how do I make sure that my sensitive data is off the machine. The answer to this question is just as easy as the questions above. at the very least you should format the hard drive. A better answer is to get a software package that will securely "wipe" the hard drive. The best answer is to have the drive professionally "wiped". Be warned! Once a drive is wiped there is absolutely no way to recover the data that was once on it.

As a buyer of a used PC you should be concerned about what is on or has been on the computer as well. What kind of problem are you inheriting? Does it have spyware or a virus? Or does it have morally questionable items on it waiting for your children to find? Do you have a legal right to use the software on PC when it arrives? At the very least when you purchased a used PC it should be reloaded with the original Operating system and software that the machine had when originally purchased. A good deal on a used computer at the least, should include the original copy of all the software installed on the machine. In some cases the manufacturer of the PC will store this software on a special section of the hard drive. The person who is in possession of the original copy, Product id and Authentication code is who has the legal right to use the software.







When you purchase software, you actually are not purchasing the software but the right to use a copy of the software on one machine. As the seller if you plan on using a software package on your new PC that you had previously

installed on the old PC, you must uninstall it from the old one first and before it is sold. Whether you are buying a new or used computer always keep the original software safe and where you will be able to find it if you need it. When you are ready to sell your Pc you will be able to include it in the sale of the PC. Whether, you are selling or donating a PC make sure to state the sale or gift is "AS IS". This will take care any implied warranty along with the PC.

Is surfing on a Hotspot safe?

In a word, No it is not safe. A hotspot is a public wireless internet connection. They are made available by businesses either as another revenue stream or as a draw to bring in more business. Not too long ago before the internet boom, Identity theft, and spyware, a virus would spread by an infected file being copied to a diskette That diskette and file was then carried to a different computer on a different network and the virus would the propagate itself in that environment. Today, we not only carry a single file from one network to another but we carry our entire computer with all of its files and our information on them. We then connect our computer to networks where J.Q. Public can sit down and connect without any protective measures at all. Ok, so a hotspot is not safe, does this mean that you should live like a recluse in fear that the instant you step outside a run away bus is going to run you down. Again no, there is no reason to over react. With a little pro-active measures you can safely surf and sip your coffee.

Follow these steps to keep your PC safe:

-  Install an anti-virus and keep the definitions up to date
-  Install a firewall and keep it up to date
-  Keep your operating system updated
-  Install a good anti-spyware application
-  Disable file sharing (never ever share the root c: drive)
-  Set a user Id and Password on your PC.