



Spyware and Adware

What is Spyware/Adware?

Spyware is a type of program that gathers personal information from your computer and relays it back to another computer, generally for advertising purposes. These programs can also change your computer's configuration, force open ads or redirect your browser.

Often, when you download freeware and shareware programs (such as Kazaa or Wild Tangent), you unknowingly trigger adware by accepting an *End User License Agreement*.

Why is spyware dangerous?

Adware and spyware not only pose privacy and security threats, these programs substantially slow down your computer because of the enormous amount of resources required to process and transmit data (and open all of those pop-up windows!). Oftentimes, your computer is not able to process legitimate programs because of the toll these programs are taking on your computer. Aside from your computer crashing, these types of programs may leave security holes that make your computer susceptible to exploitation by hackers.

How do you know if there is spyware on your computer?

Your computer may exhibit some or many of these symptoms:

- Endless pop-up windows
- Your home page has changed
- Strange toolbars on your browser
- Unfamiliar icons in your taskbar
- Your computer is sluggish, and has a hard time opening programs or saving files

How can you prevent spyware from being installed on your computer?

- Be wary of free downloads
- Always read the End User License Agreement before installing new programs
- Don't click on links within pop-up windows (click the "X" icon in the titlebar to close)
- Adjust your browser preferences to limit cookies and pop-up windows
- Install an Anti-Spyware Program

Additional Resources

CERT: [Coordinating Virus and Spyware Defense](#)

CERT: [Recognizing and Avoiding Spyware](#)

CSCIC: [Viruses/Spyware](#) (Video)



CyberAngels

A program of Guardian Angels

keeping it safe

OnGuard: [Spyware](#)