

How to Deal with Spyware

A CyberAngels Quick Tutorial



Adapted from the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team

Spyware and Adware

After completing this tutorial, you will be able to:

Identify the main risks involved with spyware.

Describe ways to detect a spyware.

Identify ways to avoid spyware.

What is spyware?

Spyware, also known as adware, is a term used to describe software that is placed on a user's computer without his or her knowledge or permission in order to collect information or create advertisements.

Spyware programs can generate an endless stream of pop-ups, and in some cases may render a computer highly inconvenient or unusable. These programs can leech a network's resources, stunt productivity, and, sometimes, make a computer more vulnerable to attacks.

What is spyware?

Because spyware is installed on a computer without the user's knowledge, the problems it creates can spend weeks developing before a user is able to fix it. Many spyware programs will try to defeat a user's attempts to eliminate it.

How Can You Identify Spyware?

If spyware has been installed, you may get a large amount of unwanted pop-up windows, even when you are not browsing the Internet. Your computer or your Internet connection may also appear to be sluggish; this is because the spyware is using your computer's resources in the background, even if you can't see the effects.

How Can You Identify Spyware?

When you browse the Internet, you may be unable to type in web pages, or you may be redirected from the web pages you want to view. Sometimes certain keys, mouse buttons, or commands are disabled. If your browser's homepage or layout has changed or appears unfamiliar, it may be due to spyware. You also may see unusual icons in your task bar or on your desktop.

What Can You Do to Avoid Spyware?

Always be wary of free software downloads from unknown websites. They may mask spyware.

Do not download programs from e-mail links if you do not know or trust the source. Some spammers advertise anti-spyware software that will in fact install spyware on your computer!

Do not click on links in pop-up windows. Pop-ups may lure you into installing spyware, or they may even be the result of spyware. Click the X in the title bar instead of clicking “close” in the pop-up window.

What Else Should You Do?

Use a firewall, if applicable. These programs will alert you if suspicious software is about to be installed on your computer.

Ask your network administrator to help you secure your browser. Many newer browsers offer a pop-up blocking option that may help prevent spyware.

Scan any new software with a legitimate virus-scan program. Newer versions of many virus-scan programs include spyware and may help you avoid installing spyware on your computer.

How to Deal with Spyware

If you think your computer may have had spyware installed on it, you should run a legitimate anti-spyware program. Ad-Aware, SpySweeper, PestPatrol, and Spybot Search and Destroy are well-known and trustworthy programs that will search your computer for spyware and eliminate it. Always make sure to use the most current version of these programs available, as spammers continually create new software. Some virus scanners will help you remove spyware as well, although these are often less effective than a dedicated spyware program.

Where to find out more

More helpful information can be found at the following websites:

How Spyware Works: <http://computer.howstuffworks.com/spyware.htm>

Steps to Help Prevent Spyware:

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/computer/spyware/prevent.msp>

OnGuard Online – Spyware: <http://onguardonline.gov/spyware.html>

US CERT Cyber Security Tips: <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-016.html>

Take the Spyware Quiz

Spyware Quiz Question 1

What is spyware?

- A) A program designed to secretly collect information.
- B) A program designed to generate advertisements.
- C) A program that can leech system resources.
- D) All of the above.

**The correct answer to Question 1 is
D) All of the above.**

Spyware Quiz Question 2

Which of the following is a good step to prevent spyware?

- A) Clicking on links in pop-ups.
- B) Downloading free software.
- C) Using a firewall.
- D) All of the above.

**The correct answer for question 2 is
C) Using a firewall.**

Spyware Quiz Question 3

If you suspect you may have spyware on your computer you should:

- A) Run a legitimate anti-spyware program.
- B) Use a different internet browser.
- C) Ignore it.
- D) Click on the pop-up links so they go away.
- E) All of the above.

**The correct answer to Question 3 is
A) Run a legitimate anti-spyware
program.**

Spyware Quiz Question 4

How can you get spyware?

- A) Downloading from untrusted sources.
- B) Clicking links in pop-up windows.
- C) Installing unknown software.
- D) All of the above.

The correct answer to Question 4 is

D) All of the above.