

Killing your Spyware

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Keeping your computer clean of SPYWARE and running fast

DISCLAIMER: I'm not to be held responsible for any damage you do to your computer based on the interpretation of my instructions. If you screw up your computer, don't blame me. If you have questions, ask.

The two tools I trust the most are Spybot Search & Destroy and Adaware SE. Popup protection depends on what version of windows you're running. If XP, install service pack 2 with 98 or ME run the google toolbar. It has a popup killer. If you take the following advice seriously, you can save time and money and get your computer operating with some speed again.

Why would I give away good advice for free? Well, I hate spyware as much as everyone else! I consider spyware almost as bad as viruses. The only difference I see is that a virus is sometimes self replicating (depending on how the code is written).

I really don't understand why spyware is legal other than it's likely that it's possible for some unnamed organizations (dare I say even governments) to use it as a cover for gaining information about your system(s) without breaking the law or needing a search warrant. Hopefully this will change soon because I see it as a privacy issue as well as tampering with personal property. Why should it be legal to screw your machine up from afar??

I'll try to provide a direct link to the products where possible.

1. Use Anti-Virus software

Pick something and use it! Anything! One other point...If you don't update the virus signatures on a regular basis (as close to daily as possible), it's almost the same as not running any Anti-Virus software! Keep it updated!!

My picks are:

AVG Antivirus (there is a free version)

<http://www.grisoft.com>

Run a full scan at least weekly, or if you think your computer is acting odd.

2. Download and use the following Anti-Spyware tools

What is spyware? I'm always surprised when I get asked what it is. It's software that tracks your moves on internet and sends that information to someone or organization on internet without your knowledge. Sometimes it's possible that they display an 'End User Licensing Agreement', but still, I don't like to read them. It doesn't matter. They install software on your computer that slows your computer down because your computer has to run their program to gather your personal information and send it to them over internet.

The real bad part is... when you get 20 or 30 of these programs running on your computer all at the same time!! You only notice that your machine is running like crap and sometimes the load is unbearable and you can't connect to internet anymore!!

Download and install the following software:

Adaware SE Personal (free version available)

<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/>

Spybot Search & Destroy (free)

<http://security.kolla.de/>

Now, go ahead and run them with default settings. For the best protection keep them updated by checking for updates like your antivirus software. New stuff comes out every day. Try to update them every day you use your computer on internet.

Run a scan using both products if you visit sites you don't normally visit before you shut your machine down. Do this

because some of the spyware installs itself deeper on your system at startup. This only makes it harder to remove later.

Blocking Spyware

Blocking spyware from installing is a good defense. Spybot (Spybot Search & Destroy) has settings that you need to set to do this. First off, put Spybot in ADVANCED mode. Select MODE from the menu dropdown at the top of the screen and select ADVANCED.

Now select IMMUNIZE on the left. On the right is two options. Click the green PLUS at the top of the page to install blocking of spyware. Next, make sure the checkmark is checked on ENABLE PERMANENT BLOCKING

Select TOOLS (on the lefthand menu) and click on the HOSTS FILE icon (on the right). This will list all the KNOWN spyware installers web sites. Click the green PLUS at the top pf the page. This will BLOCK all those bad sites from your computer to protect you. Make sure the check mark is checked on the host file icon. You're now blocking the worst offenders of spyware installs.

I go through these procedures every time I get an update of Spybot (just in case)

Use these products to run a scan weekly (or more frequent depending on your internet use) and your computer will be much more responsive!

3. Apply Microsoft Updates and patches.

A lot of spyware and viruses have been built upon Microsoft security holes. Go into Internet Explorer and do the windows update. Select TOOLS and select UPDATE.

Apply any critical updates. After they apply. Go back and do it until the counter says there are no more available (0). Partially updating still leaves well known security holes.

I moved away from Internet Explorer some time ago. Go with Firefox or Mozilla for a more secure internet experience.

Firefox

<http://www.mozilla.org/>

You will still need to check for updates with Internet Explorer on a weekly basis or enable automatic updates if IE is your main browser.