

Defending your computer against spyware and malware

The following is a how-to guide to avoid falling prey to fake anti-spyware and anti-virus software otherwise known as malware.

Here are a few tips:

1. Avoid using peer-to-peer file sharing applications. If Limewire, Bearshare, Kazaa or Bittorrent are in a computer's program list, malware is found almost 100% of the time. There is no way to safely download with these programs because you cannot trust the source.
2. Never open an e-mail attachment if you are not 100% sure of what it is. Even if you know the person who sent the e-mail, be aware of attachments. Many computers with infections will send out e-mail to everyone on their address book without the owner ever knowing.
3. If you get pop-ups when viewing Web sites avoid clicking inside of the pop-up window. Always click the red "X" in the upper right-hand corner. The "cancel" or "close" button in the pop-up might have undesirable effects.
4. If you get a message from your computer warning you that it is infected and you need to download software to remove the virus, **DON'T DO IT**. At this point you are already infected; downloading the fake virus remover will only make it worse. No legitimate software ever uses this tactic.
5. Avoid free downloads unless you are absolutely sure you can trust the source. Often these freebies are packaged with a good deal of adware or spyware, so be careful.

The programs listed below are known malware that infects your system and may render it useless:

Antivirus 2008/2009

Spyware Guard 2008/2009

Advanced Antivirus 2008/2009

Antivirus Lab 2009/2008

Virus Remover 2008/2009

Virus Response Lab 2009/2008

Pro Antispyware 2008/2009

Vista Antispyware 2008/2009

Also beware of browser add-ons such as the "My Web Search" toolbar.

You can run programs such as "Malware Bytes" or "Super Anti-Spyware." Both are free to download and use. These will help protect and clean your system. Below is a list of free virus, spyware and malware removal programs, as well as the link to where they can be downloaded.

Free Anti-virus software.

Do not use more than one anti-virus software on your computer as this could cause a conflict

AVG Free Anti-virus	< http://free.avg.com >
Avira AntiVir	< http://www.free-av.com >
Free Malware removal software	
MalwareBytes	< http://www.malwarebytes.org >
Free Spyware removal software	
Super Anti-Spyware	< http://www.superantispyware.com >
Windows Defender	http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=435bfce7-da2b-4a6a-afa4-f7f14e605a0d&displaylang=en
Ad-Aware	< http://www.lavasoft.com/products/ad_aware_free.php >