

Spyware And Adware May Be Slowing Your System To A Crawl

Is that new P4 system with loads of RAM you bought only six months ago running slow as molasses? It can't be time for an upgrade already, can it? Chances are your system has plenty of speed, but is riddled with spyware, malware, adware, and the like.



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Steve Smith of CPU magazine shares the classic definition of spyware as *a program that gathers information about a user without the user's permission*. Spyware and adware are programs that gather information about what a user is doing on the Internet or serve as a marker to send ads to your desktop. Many would say that this type of software is an invasion of privacy. It has definitely caused sluggish performance, and interruption of Internet connection for many consumers. As a computer tech and the owner of a computer sales and services company, YourWay Computing, I have seen first hand the damage and frustration spyware and adware can cause. I believe it has been the number one problem for home computer users for at least the last one to two years, even more of a problem than viruses.

Many software programs you download for free are subsidized with spyware and adware - many file-sharing clients, such as Kazaa, download managers, and utilities software. If you're getting software for free you better believe there's a catch. Not only will spyware and adware slow down your computer and increase ads on your desktop, but removing them can put a dent in your wallet. Software companies that use this method of paying for their software aren't very upfront about the nature of their "free"

software. Permission to install spyware and adware is hidden in user agreements that the user must agree to before installing the software. Users need to read these agreements and any others terms before installing so-called "free" software.

Clicking on some pop-ups may install spyware or adware. Quite frequently you may receive pop-ups while visiting a web site, asking you to install something, which will enable you to view the web site properly. Not all of these messages are legitimate, but some are. You will have to decide if you trust this company or website. Some pop-ups may get your attention by offering to speed up your Internet connection, tune-up your computer, or even remove spyware, but in fact are installing spyware or adware. Some pop-ups may ask you if you would always like to trust this company or website. If you choose yes you have giving your permission to this company or website to install software on your computer without asking you in the future.



What can you do to prevent spyware and adware? You may want to start by removing any spyware or adware that is already on your system. I recommend two utilities for removing spyware - Ad-aware and Spybot Search & Destroy. Links to these utilities are below. John Shaw, a local computer techni-



cian, says, "There is no sure way to avoid it all, but paying attention while browsing, and using programs like Ad-aware regularly can help reduce the problem significantly." Users must be mindful of what they're clicking on. Don't just click "yes" or "ok" without reading the entire message. Read licensing agreements when installing new or free software and be careful what you install on your computer.

If you need help removing spyware or are still having problems with your computer, my company, YourWay Computing, is available to help. Call me at 877-4-YOURWAY or send me an email to proctor@yourwayc.com.

Ad-aware:
www.lavasoftusa.com
Spybot:
www.safer-networking.org



Online Safety Tips

- 1 Keep your personal information private including your name, phone number, address, passwords and social security or credit card numbers.
- 2 Turn off the computer if you feel uncomfortable with what you are seeing on the screen.
- 3 Never agree to let children meet someone in person who they have met online.
- 4 Don't share photos of yourself with strangers.
- 5 Keep the computer your child uses in a central location.
- 6 Join children as they surf the Internet.
- 7 Install anti-virus software on your computer.
- 8 Remember, not everyone on the Web is who they say they are.