

Maintaining and Protecting Your Computer

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Today our computers are under attack from viruses, ad-ware and spyware. Protecting our computers requires the use of Anti-Adware and Anti-Spyware software. Keeping our internet browser programs and Operating Systems, (O.S.) updated is essential. Educating ourselves to what kinds of dangers are lurking on the internet and what to do about it is increasingly important.

Computer Viruses: Dangerous

- A program or piece of code that is loaded on your computer without your consent or knowledge.
- Inflict damage and/or render the computer unusable by reformatting hard drives, deleting files.
- May use your computer as a laboratory to reproduce itself to attack other computers.

Solution: Load an anti-virus program. (AV) Load only one instance of AV software.

- Purchased AV products come with telephone support and limited updates.
- Free AV software comes without support and unlimited updates.
- You can download free versions at www.download.com .
- Search for “Free **AVG**” or “Free **Avast**”

Adware: Symtoms

- Programs that are loaded onto your computer without your knowledge or consent.
- Collects information about the kind of websites you visit sends that information to its writers.
- Sends pop up advertisements and email to your computer.
- May change your browser’s homepage, add toolbars and search engines without your consent
- Computer runs slower and slower.

Solution: Load an anti-adware or combination anti-adware/spyware program.

- Purchased anti-adware products come with telephone support and limited updates.
- Free anti-adware software comes without support and unlimited updates.
- Ad-Aware and MalwareBytes have free versions available at: www.download.com .

Spyware: Dangerous

- Programs that are loaded onto your computer without your knowledge or consent.
- Collects personal information such as credit card numbers stored on your computer.

- Tracks where the user goes on the web and records keystrokes.
- May scan hard drives
- Reports what it finds to its writers.

Solution: Load an anti-spyware or combination of anti-adware/ spyware program.

- Purchased anti-spyware products come with telephone support and limited updates.
- Free anti-spyware software comes without support and unlimited updates.

Unlike Anti-Virus software, you can and should run more than one kind of anti-adware and anti-spyware software. Different Anti Adware/Spyware products often catch things the other software missed. Again you can download free version of the latest versions of AdAware, Spybot Search and Destroy, Malwarebytes at www.download.com .

Update Update Update.

- Operating Systems, Internet Browsers, E-Mail software, and office suite software require periodic updates.
- Click on “**Help**” at the top of the program window and then click on “**Check For Updates**”.

Firewalls

Firewalls are designed to stand as a protective guard between a computer and the internet. Firewalls may be hardware based or software based. Firewalls in general can be set to one of three levels of security. For instance the Firewall that comes with Windows XP can be set to “On”, “On with exceptions”, or to “Off”.

Many software programs have legitimate reasons for conducting two-way communication between a home computer and a computer that is part of the World Wide Web or Internet. Examples include online banking services, anti-virus, and other software programs that require constant updates. Firewall software can be set by the user to allow two-way communication between the computer and websites specified by the user. The Microsoft Firewall is free and included in Service Pack 2 for Windows XP.

The free version of Zone Labs’ firewall, is available at: www.download.com

E-Mail Concerns

Junk/Spam E-mail, Phishing, and E-Mail Infected with Viruses.

- Never buy anything from an unsolicited e-mail message. These are potentially fraudulent websites.
- Do not click on links embedded in the junk mail message. This verifies your e-mail address is current.
- Never update account information from a link in an e-mail message.

Companies such as Banks, Credit Card companies, etc. will never ask for you to update your information by clicking on a link embedded in the e-mail. If you need to update your personal information, go directly to the website u

- Investigate how to use the spam filters contained in your e-mail software.
- Use e-mail filtering service. I.E. Spamarrest
- By default Anti-Virus software scans your e-mail. Do not change this setting.
- Do not open mail attachments, unless you know the sender.

Internet Filters/Blocking Websites

The internet can bring both good and bad things. Taking steps to protect you and your family from inappropriate websites concerns all of us.

- Hardware and software solutions for filtering websites.
- Filtered on computer by software- Customer Support with updates for duration of contract.
- Filtered by Server maintained by Service. Customer Support and provider updates their Server.
- Do the research. Ask friends what has worked for them.

Strategies for Making Yourself a Lesser Target

Viruses –

- Do not download “Free Games” from the internet. Most will load spyware/adware.
- Do not load file sharing software: i.e. Limewire, Kaaza, and BearShare. This type of software can lay your computer open to the downloading of virus infected files.

Spam and Junk E-mail –

- Use a different e-mail software, such as Thunderbird (Mozilla), IncrediMail, etc.
- Create a new e-mail account strictly for family and friends to write to you.
- Create a new e-mail account to use at websites that require an e-mail address as part of the registration process. Utilize the junk/spam e-mail controls built into your e-mail program.

Internet Browsers – When possible use an Internet Browser other than Microsoft’s “Internet Explorer”.

- Mozilla Firefox – www.mozilla.com
- Opera – www.opera.com

Internet Cookies, Good or Bad?

By Jerry Castillo

Facts:

- Cookies are text files, they cannot be used to pass on viruses.
- Cookies were developed to keep track of your activity on their website, i.e. items put into a virtual shopping basket, pages visited at the website.
- Cookies sent to your computer represent info about you stored on the Server computers of the website.

Two Kinds of cookies.

- First party cookies sent to your computer from the website you are visiting. Example: If you visit Amazon.com, they are the “First Party” and will place a cookie on your computer.
- Third party cookies are sent via links on the primary site that you are visiting. These links, if clicked on may take you to a second website. Example: If you visiting Amazon.com and click on one of the advertiser links, this is a third party and this third party may try to send you a cookie.

What to Do.

Internet browsers can be set to accept all cookies or first party cookies only. Good practice would be to accept first party cookies and reject third party cookies.

Concerns.

Website may sell your information to advertisers. A source of unsolicited email.

Some cookies may tracking cookies functioning as spyware.

The concern about first party or third cookies, is that the website that creates the cookie retains your information and may sell the information about you to advertisers and others. This practice is one of the sources for unsolicited email. Another concern more alarming is that some cookies are tracking cookies and function as a type of spyware. This type of cookie reports websites visited by you to the owner of the cookie. These can be avoided by installing Anti-Adware/Anti-Spyware software, which helps protect you against this type of intrusive cookie. Every computer should also have firewall software installed and updated. Microsoft Windows comes with firewall software. Set web browsers to either accept only first party cookies or to not accept any cookies. However, many websites will not work correctly without at least accepting first party cookies such as the New Family Search website.

What's next?

- Find out how to adjust your web browser to restrict third party cookies.
- Use your browser's tool to purge all cookies from your computer, so that you can start over and accept only first party cookies. If you have a “Shopping Basket” filled with items to purchase, you should finalize the transaction before purging cookies. Purging cookies will empty the shopping basket.
- Ask a computer savvy friend or relative to help you if you are not sure how to complete the above steps.