

Technology Corner

By: George Champine

This issue we talk about spyware and adware. There are many types of software related to advertising and aggressive marketing. The types of advertising software vary, but are generally the following:

Adware – Adware is software that supports itself or another program by displaying ads while you are connected to the Internet. Most Adware programs track how you browse the Internet and report the information to an interested third party without your approval.

Spyware - Spyware is software planted secretly in your computer by installing “free” software or by some web pages. It is software that gathers and transmits information without one's knowledge. Spyware programs usually track information about the Web sites visited, browser and system information, and your computer IP address (the number that represents a network device on the Internet).

Preventing and removing unwanted ads and marketing material

The following steps help you find unwanted Adware and Spyware, and remove or disable them:

To prevent Adware from being installed on your system, purchase and use full versions of software that are not supported by advertising. If you want to download and use software that claims to be free, carefully read the license agreement and cancel the installation if there is something that you do not understand or agree to. Know the software before you install it.

Preventing spyware and hijacking software

Normally, Spyware and hijacking software are installed when you "consent" to a security warning window that appears over a Web page. The Security Warning window contains the following similar text:

1. “Do you want to install and run <name of free program >. Signed on <date and time> by <name of software vendor or advertiser>.
2. By clicking “yes” on a malicious Security Warning screen, a script or control is integrated into the browsing system. The script or control changes the behavior of your Web browser to suit the needs of the aggressive advertiser.

To prevent this from happening, never click Yes on Security Warning windows that appear with Web pages that you don't trust. Close these windows by clicking **No** or pressing the Alt and F4 keys together at the same time. Never respond to e-mail or web pages that offer to scan your system for Spyware or that claim that your system has Spyware.

Detecting and removing adware, spyware, and hijacking software

Aggressive Spyware can be extremely difficult to remove. Do not attempt to remove these kinds of software without the aid of Spyware removal software. You can manually remove most non-aggressive Adware by uninstalling the software that it came with or removing the Adware itself using Windows Add/Remove programs.

Good software for eliminating Spyware includes the free “Spybot Search & Destroy” from PepiMK Software at <http://find.pcworld.com/28403>) and the free “Ad-aware” (which I prefer) from Lavasoft at <http://www.lavasoftusa.com/support/download/>).