

Malware Programs

Question: A popup ad appeared on my computer urging me to purchase a particular anti-virus program. Should I do this?

It is critical that you have installed on your computer a good anti-virus program and a good anti-spyware program and a good firewall. They protect your computer from allowing anything to be brought in that can infect your computers files. This protection is in place no matter where you connect to the internet using that same computer.

The ones that most of us use these days are the FREE AVG, FREE Malwarebytes and either the Windows firewall or a firewall such as comodo which not only protects your computer from what comes in, but also from messages and/or commands that could be sent out in the event your computer does get infected.

There are many good malware products, but popups mean they are trying to sell it to you to make money for themselves. It may be a good product, but you paying a price for it does not confirm that it will do a better job for YOU. Some rather expensive products are so complex and difficult to use, that they do a less than acceptable job because you either may not understand how to use them, or you may not have the settings set to do the best job on your particular computer.

The times when you're most vulnerable is from the time that a new virus or bad spyware is created and sent out to the internet by the creeps that created it and BEFORE that piece of malware is first reported to one of the 'good' anti-virus and anti-spyware programpeople.

As soon as it is reported those companys have their programers build a definition file to recognize that particular malware and block it. They then download that definition file to your computer if you're their customer. Most also share that information worldwide so that other such programs can also protect their customers. This is why it is critically important that you make sure that your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs are updated often.

Most anti-virus programs are updated by their company once a week. Some of the FREE anti-spyware programs must be updated manually by YOU. So, a safe practice is to bring up these programs every few days and check for an update. Most of the time you will get a message that you have the latest update from your anti-virus program. Your anti-spyware program may download a new update if it is one of the FREE ones that require you to do the updating request.

Most important after learning the above is to be alert and do what you can to protect your important information while connected to the internet.

1. NEVER order ANYTHING or transact important business unless you are on a SECURE website. To confirm that it is a SECURE site, look for the https rather than just http in the address bar and look also for the LOCKED lock at the bottom of the webpage you're on. The 's' added to the http and the locked lock signifies that the information being passed via the internet is being encrypted, most often several times encrypted.

2. When using computers other than your own, never leave that computer until you've cleared the cookies, deleted files & cleared the HISTORY from the browser. On the browser, click Tools and clear history, delete cookies and files. I do this even on my own computer when I've been on financial sites or ordered things online. AOL users can clear the history simply by clicking EDIT on the menu bar and select Clear History. This eliminates that dropdown history list when you click the down arrow in the browser address bar.

This prevents trouble if someone sits down behind you at the same computer, brings up the same browser, usually MSIE and clicks on the down arrow in the address bar. If you didn't clear it before leaving, there would be available the list of sites you visited and if you had your password stored, all they need to do to go to the page you were on is to click that link listed there and they're in your page....the computer doesn't even know that it's not you returning to the page. That's the purpose of History storage...to make it easy to return to a page you've visited. I have my HISTORY settings on 0, but even then, when I open MSIE and click on the down arrow in the address box there will be the link to several websites listed that I have visited recently.

So, if I had been using someone else's computer, another person sitting down at that computer after me, could click that list and go to the sites I've visited. Worse, if my login info is stored at that site, they would not have to logon, just click the login should the box popup.

3. All floppy disks, flash drives or CDs given you from someone should be scanned for malware before using in your computer.

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