



IT TIPS & TRICKS

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Computer threats can come in many different forms. The most common threats can slow your computer to a crawl and make you want to throw it out the window. But with some understanding and tools you can re-claim your computer. Below are descriptions of these common threats, some tips on how to prevent them and some programs you can use to stop these malicious programs from disrupting your every day computer experience.

Viruses

Computer viruses are software programs designed to deliberately interfere with computer operation by corrupting, deleting data and initiating other unwanted processes. Often, viruses spread themselves to other computers and throughout the Internet, usually slowing things down and causing other problems in the process. Computer viruses range from the mildly annoying to the downright destructive, and come in new and different forms every day. Viruses can infect your machine through every media that is connected to your computer from floppy drives to the most common one... your e-mail. Because of the commonality of viruses and the potential destructiveness of them, the best way to prevent viruses is to have an anti-virus program installed and running with the newest virus definitions. Symantec Anti-virus (symantec.com) and McAfee Anti-virus (mcafee.com) are two of the most common anti-virus programs out there. They both cost about \$40.00 and can be purchased at any computer store or downloaded from their respective websites. If you are looking for a free home solution then try Grisoft AVG Anti-virus (grisoft.com). All three companies also provide a corporate solution as well. Home Internet service providers often offer free versions anti-virus software for their customers. You should check with your provider.

Spyware

Spyware comes in various forms, but basically it is a program or piece of information on your computer that either sends data about you or your computer habits to someone else on the Internet. This can be a company that is collecting data, or a thief seeking to steal access to your computer or financial data such as your bank

information. Spyware is bad for several reasons. For one it can hog precious system resources like memory and hard disk space. If your computer runs really slow, but it never used to, then it probably is infected. If you have never done a Spyware scan then I can almost guarantee there is Spyware on your system slowing things down and snooping on you. It can also compromise your privacy, providing outsiders with information about your computer habits. If a Spyware program installs a key logger it can even capture your keystrokes and send it to a third party. This can potentially expose your user IDs and passwords to thieves. Some Spyware are Trojans which allow someone to log into your computer remotely and use it for their own purposes like sending spam or launching malicious attacks on other computers on the Internet, making it look like you are at fault. Spyware generally gets installed on your computer via your e-mail and web usage. The best way to minimize your chances of being infected is to stay off of unknown websites and not to open e-mails that you are not expecting. But once infected the best program to clean such software off your computer is Spybot - Search & Destroy. It is free and can be found at download.com.

Adware

Adware is a close relative of Spyware. Adware is software that is installed on your computer to show you advertisements. By doing so, it can also slow your PC by using valuable systems resources and slow your internet connection by using bandwidth to retrieve advertisements. In addition, Adware can increase the instability of your system because many Adware applications are not programmed well. And most importantly Adware can annoy you and waste huge amounts of your time by popping unwanted ads onto your screen, which requires you to close them before you can get back to using your computer. The best way to minimize your chances of being infected is to stay off of unknown websites and do not open e-mails that you are not expecting. This easily can be cleaned off of your system by using a free program called Ad-Aware SE also found at download.com.

If you suspect you are suffering from any of the above computer maladies and need assistance with the problem, do not hesitate to contact us.