STRIKE TWICE COMPUTERS

What is "Spyware"?

by Keith Aleshire (952) 939-0174

Spyware is a generic name for small software programs that get installed onto your computer that monitors your computer and Internet use. Spyware slows down your computer, your network, and your Internet speed.

Spyware comes in several flavors:

Adware. This type of spyware watches what websites you go to and displays pop-up ads. Adware is usually embedded in "free" software you may install, such as:

- Music-sharing software (e.g. *Kazaa, BearShare, Grokster*)

- Online ordering enhancements (e.g. *Gator eWallet*)

- Download or Internet accelerators (e.g. *Download Accelerator*)

- Coupon offers (e.g. *SaveNow*, *ebates*)

- E-mail enhancements (e.g. *Smiley Central*)

- Internet browser add-ons (e.g. *HotBar, Coolbar, MySearchBar*)

- Atomic clock time synchronization software (e.g. *Precision Time*)

- Appointment book software (e.g. *Date Manager*)

Adware often provides some helpful feature, but in exchange, it transmits information in the background as you move around the Web.

Malware. Some spyware is downright malicious. These include *keyloggers* that try to capture credit card and Social Security numbers and transmit them to a third party. Others are called *browser hijackers*, which change your browser's home page to somewhere else and is almost impossible to change back. *Trojan horses* let hackers not only track your behavior but even taken control of your computer.

Spyware Symptoms

The signs that you are infected with spyware are:

- Slow or freezing computer.

- Slower-than-usual Internet or network speed.

- Several ads popping up (popup ads) on your computer.

- Your home page is changed to an unfamiliar one and cannot be changed back (browser hijacking)

- Your Internet browser locks up or gives errors.

Removing Spyware

Spyware is <u>not</u> a computer virus and therefore cannot be stopped by antivirus software. Deleting your Internet cookies helps thwart spyware but does not get rid of it.

You may install a popup ad blocker but you are merely treating the symptom, not the disease. The spyware is still slowing down your computer.

Some spyware removal tools you may come across are fronts for more spyware or simply a waste of money.

The most respected (*and free*) spyware removal software is Spybot's *Search and Destroy* and Lavasoft *Ad-aware.* However, we recommend a professional to remove your spyware. We often use a half-dozen tools and

manual labor to remove spyware and prevent future spyware problems.

Prevention Tips

- Install all of the Critical Windows Updates to plug Internet Explorer and Windows security holes exploited by spyware.

- Avoid installing "free" software from dubious sources.

- Don't allow "drive-by downloading" of software programs when asked.

- Avoid shady websites such as those that promote gambling, pornography, and dating services.

- Use the spyware blocking utilities included in some spyware removal programs.

- Use firewall software, which detects and blocks some spyware attacks.

- Don't rush to click on the "Yes" or "OK" button on a popup window.

- Don't allow your home page to be changed, when asked.

- Use Alt+F4 to close a popup window, not "OK" or "Close" or even the "X" in the upper righthand corner.

- Don't rely on popup ad blockers; these only treat the symptoms, not the disease!

- Periodically purge your browser cookies to cover your tracks.

- Although drastic, consider switching to a different browser, such as Firefox or Opera, instead of Microsoft Internet Explorer.

Right: Agreeing to End User License Agreements like the one here opens the floodgates to spyware.

Spyware slows down your computer, your network and your Internet service.

We highly recommend you let us professionally remove and innoculate your computers from spyware.

Security Warning

Do you want to install and run "[after accepting our agreements] Precision Time/Date Manager, free 10 second downloads that display exact time/date and offers based on websites you view? Click here to read our agreements. Click Yes to accept" signed on 1/31/2003 8:49 PM and distributed by:

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Yes   No   More Info