

COMPUTER VIRUSES

"A computer virus is a computer program that can replicate itself and spread from one computer to another. The term "virus" is also commonly, but erroneously, used to refer to other types of malware, including but not limited to adware and spyware programs that do not have a reproductive ability."

- Wikipedia

FILES THAT SPREAD VIRUSES

First things first, always be careful when downloading files off of the internet and make sure you're downloading files from a trusted source. Viruses must be executed to have any effect on your computer, so there are a couple of file types that

have no chance of containing a virus. These files are predominantly sound, image, and text file types.

Some of these safe files include:



The unsafe files that you do need to watch out for are as follows:



These are just a few of the most common file types that viruses can be attached to. These file types are known as program files and they are able to activate or execute viruses that may be hidden in them. A virus cannot be activated just by downloading it though; it must be triggered by opening the program file.

A full glossary and more information on viruses can be found at these locations:

<http://www.cai.com/virusinfo/encyclopedia/>

<http://vil.mcafee.com/>

http://www.pspl.com/virus_info/

TROJAN HORSES



A Trojan horse is a file that is often confused to be a computer virus. While it is still harmful, it is not considered a virus because it does not spread from computer to computer. What a Trojan horse does do is disguise itself as another file, such as a computer game or a Word document, and then activates once you open up the file.

EMAIL VIRUSES



Emails can contain harmful files, including both computer viruses and Trojan horses. Viruses found in emails can't harm your computer unless they are executed, or opened. As you can see there's a theme here, be smart when you download and only open files that you know are safe.

KEEPING YOUR COMPUTER SAFE

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE

The first and best step you can take to protecting your computer from viruses is to install an anti-virus program.

You can find some of the top ant-virus softwares at these websites:

Aladdin Knowledge Systems

www.esafe.com

Phone: 1-206-524-9159

Computer Associates International, Inc.

www.cai.com

Phone: 1-516-342-4100

McAfee

www.mcafee.com

Phone: 1-972-855-7044

Norman Data Defense Systems

www.norman.com

Phone: 1-703-267-6109

Symantec Corporation

www.symantec.com

Phone: 1-514-465-8420

Norton Australia

au.norton.com

Phone: 1-877-484-9540

Frisk Software International

www.f-prot.com

Phone: 354-540-7400

Network Associates, Inc.

www.nai.com

Phone: 1-408-988-3832

Panda Software

www.pandasoftware.com

Phone: 1-415-392-5950

Trend Micro, Inc.

www.trendmicro.com

Phone: 1-408-257-1500

QUICK TIPS

Update your software frequently. There are new types of viruses coming out every day and if your anti-virus program might not catch them if it's too old.

Always be careful, even if you have an anti-virus software. It is common for some programs to miss Trojan horses so you watch out for suspicious files.

Backup your computer regularly. This is a good habit to get into in case any fatal errors occur.

Be aware of everything you download. This task might seem mundane but it's one of the most important steps you can take.

Scan any new files you may download. You can perform a virus scan with your anti-virus software as an extra protection measure.

DEALING WITH AN INFECTION



Before you do anything, make sure your computer isn't having minor malfunctions. Try restarting or powering down your computer before taking any anti-virus measures, if the problem persists follow these steps:



Relax, making any rash decisions can land you in even more hot water. Don't continue to use the computer if you feel that you cannot handle removing the virus, it's just not worth it.



If you haven't downloaded an anti-virus program, do that first. The software will contain instructions on how to clean up your computer.



Disconnect your computer from the internet and all devices that it shares with. This will stop the virus from spreading further.



Hopefully, you've created backup files for your computer. Use those backups to restore the files that have been infected. Before restoring make sure the backups weren't also infected.