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# The Difference Between Malware & Virus

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Without protection, a computer can be infected with programs that can cause you to lose important data or even destroy the way the computer functions any time it is connected to the Internet or another computer.

## Malware

Malware is a general term used to mean any program that is unknowingly downloaded onto a computer with malicious intent. The two different types of malware are viruses and spyware. They may be acquired when downloading a wanted program, or when opening a webpage, email or instant message.

## Spyware

Spyware is a type of program that is used to obtain information from a computer. It can report what websites a computer has gone to, or obtain personal information that may be stored on the hard drive. There are some types of spyware that can copy keystrokes to obtain data that may not be saved, but has been entered in a form or document to be sent elsewhere.

## Viruses

A program that is installed onto a computer with the intent of damaging files or whole programs is a virus. A Trojan virus is one that allows another computer access to the infected computer. Any type of virus, that is not found and removed, usually ends with the corruption of the computer's operating system, effectively crashing the computer.