

8.7 Spyware or Adware

Spyware is a growing problem for both computer users and for organisations. There is, of course, the risk that such applications might compromise some sensitive information. Another problem of such applications is that they consume too much of your system's resources. Spyware and adware both use memory. If your system has too many of such applications, they can consume a good majority of your system's resources, making it very troublesome for your legitimate software to run.

The primary difference between spyware and adware is what they do on your machine. They both infect your machine in the same manner. Spyware seeks to obtain information from your machine and make it available to another person. This can be done in a number of ways. Adware seeks to create pop-up ads on your machine. Because these ads are not generated by the web browser, many traditional pop-up blockers will not stop them.

Both spyware and adware are growing problems for network security and home PC security. This is an important element of computer security software that was largely ignored once upon a time. Even today, not enough people take spyware seriously enough to guard against it. Some of these applications simply change your home page to a different site (these are known as home page hijackers); others add items to your favourites (or read items from them). Other applications can be even more intrusive.

The list below identifies famous types of adware and spyware:

- Gator
- RedSheriff

8.7.1 Anti-Spyware

Most antivirus products include anti-spyware. However, you can purchase dedicated anti-spyware software. Anti-spyware is an excellent way to defend your computer against spyware and adware, just as antivirus software defends against viruses and Trojan horses. Essentially, it is software that scans your computer to check if spyware is running on your machine. Most anti-spyware works by checking your system for known spyware files. It is difficult to identify specific activities that identify spyware, as you can with viruses. Each

application must simply be checked against a list of known spyware. This means that you must maintain some sort of subscription service so that you can obtain routine updates to your spyware definition list.

In today's Internet, running anti-spyware is as essential as running antivirus software. Failing to do so can lead to serious consequences. Personal data and perhaps sensitive business data can easily leak out of your organisation without your knowledge due to spyware. You should also keep in mind that it is entirely possible for spyware to be the vehicle for purposeful industrial espionage.