

How to Remove & Prevent Spyware

Spyware and other unwanted software can invade your privacy, bombard you with pop-up windows, slow down your computer, and even make your computer crash. Many kinds of unwanted software, including spyware, are designed to be difficult to remove. If you try to uninstall this software like any other program, you might find that the program reappears as soon as you restart your computer. If you're having trouble uninstalling unwanted software, you may need to download a tool to do the job for you. Several companies offer free and low-cost software that will check your computer for spyware and other unwanted software and help you remove it.

Some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) include anti-spyware software in their service packages. Check with your ISP to see if they can recommend or provide a tool. If your ISP doesn't offer a removal tool for spyware and other unwanted software, keep in mind that removing unwanted software with these tools may mean you will no longer be able to use a free program that came with the spyware.

Here are several ways you can help protect your computer against spyware and other unwanted software.

Download, install and update anti-spyware protection

We recommend

- Lavasoft's Ad-Aware
- Spybot's - Search & Destroy
- Microsoft Windows Antispyware

Use a firewall

While spyware and other unwanted software often comes bundled with other programs or originates from unscrupulous Web sites and some spyware can even be placed on your computer remotely by hackers. Using a firewall provides a helpful defense against these problems.

Update your Operating System

If you use Windows, one way to help prevent security problems from spyware and other unwanted software is to make sure your software is updated. Visit Windows Update to confirm that you've downloaded all the latest critical and security updates for your Windows Operating System.

Adjust Internet Explorer security settings

You can adjust your Internet Explorer Web browser's security settings to determine how much—or how little—information you are willing to accept from a Web site. To view your current Internet Explorer security settings:

1. In Internet Explorer, click **Tools**
2. click **Internet Options**
3. click the **security** tab
4. click and highlight **Internet**

Note: Microsoft recommends that you set the security settings for the Internet zone to Medium or higher.

Surf and download more safely

The best defense against viruses, spyware and other unwanted software is not to download it in the first place. Here are a few helpful tips that can protect you from downloading software you don't want:

- Only download programs from Web sites you trust. If you're not sure whether to trust a program you are considering downloading, ask a knowledgeable friend or enter the name of the program into your favorite search engine to see if anyone else has reported problems with that software.
- Read **all** security warnings, license agreements, and privacy statements associated with any software you download.
- Never click "agree" or "OK" to close a window. Instead, click the red "x" in the corner of the window or press the **Alt + F4** buttons on your keyboard to close a window.
- Be wary of popular "free" music and movie file-sharing programs, and be sure you clearly understand all of the software packaged with those programs and the license agreement.