

Tuesday TechTip:

How'd that get on my computer?

Ever notice a program installed on your computer and not know how it got there? Annoying pop-ups, extraneous toolbars, mysterious start-up homepages, and the ultimate computer slow-down are symptoms of infection due to malware.

What is Malware?

Malware is a general term short for malicious software, designed to specifically damage or disrupt a computer system. Many people are affected by malware through one the sneakiest forms of malicious attacks called 'drive-by downloads'.

Avoid a Drive-by Download:

Drive-by downloading occurs when a program is automatically installed on your computer without your consent or even your knowledge. Drive-by downloads may occur by simply visiting a website, viewing an e-mail message or by clicking on a misleading popup window.

In April 2007, researchers at Google investigated billions of URLs over the past year-and-a-half, and found more than three million unique URLs on over 180,000 websites automatically installing malware.

Watch where you surf.

Similar to catching some waves in the ocean, you may not want to surf the internet in unknown waters or known threatening waters. Key steps in protecting your computer include:

- Always make sure your web browser, anti-virus software and operating system have the latest updates installed.
- Avoid 'shady' websites. There are no clear lines when dealing with sites that may be malicious, being knowledgeable of sites that are *more likely* to be suspect will help provide guidelines.
 - Lyric sites
 - Free download sites (especially screensavers and other add-ons)
 - Free file sharing (P2P) sites/software
 - Porn sites
- Only download software from sites you trust! Be skeptical of offers that may be too good to be true.
- Read, read, and re-read! Especially when closing pop-up windows or downloading and installing software.
- Never click links or download software from unknown senders



Stopbadware.org:

Coordinated by Harvard Law School's *Berkman Center for Internet and Society* in partnership with several well-known companies, including Google, AOL, VeriSign, PayPal, Mozilla, Stopbadware.org is "committed to protecting Internet and computer users from the threats to privacy and security caused by bad software." The *Badware Clearinghouse* contains a wealth of information on suspected dangerous websites.

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For additional tips, check out the Technology Solutions Center self-service portal at <http://help.ccis.edu>