

D12 - The Digital Dozen Newsletter

12 Links on a Hot Topic Every Week of the School Year!

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Malware

Malware is malicious software that takes control of your computer's operation without your approval. For the purposes of this issue, malware will refer to spyware and adware. Spyware monitors your online actions; adware displays banners or pop-up windows and often includes spyware as well. Those who create malware currently target the Windows operating system because it is used on 90-plus percent of all computers. Malware is not a virus. It is designed to exploit your computer system for commercial gain through pop-up advertisements, theft of your personal information, monitoring of your web-browsing activity for and directing your browser to advertising sites. Malware can redirect your browser to a 'false' site that looks legitimate (e.g. eBay) then takes your personal information for malicious use. Malware can also take control of your computer and turn it into a 'Bot' which sends out spam or monitors other computers.

Some legitimate software applications also collect data or distribute advertisements without properly informing you about their activity. This includes search toolbars which some portals now offer at no charge as an add-on to your browser. This can impair your computer's performance and the performance of the network. A severe malware infection can cause a substantial loss in computer system performance (more than a 50% loss in severe situations) including crashing and freezing of your system and difficulty in connecting to the Internet or logging on to a network. These applications should be removed from your computer system using anti-spyware tools.

As we head into the new school year, please consider these twelve applications to help protect your Windows-based machines.

- *Walter*

Rating Scale

- A** Best of the Web
- B** Highly recommended
- C** Well designed, but specialized
- D** Useful in limited contexts

Audience Scale

- P** Primary – Grades K-2
- E** Elementary – Grades 3-5
- M** Middle – Grades 6-8
- H** High Grades 9-12

Resource	Rating	Audience
<p>Windows Anti-Spyware Beta http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=321cd7a2-6a57-4c57-a8bd-dbf62eda9671&displaylang=en</p> <p>This Microsoft agent offers the ability to manually and automatically detect and remove malicious software from your system. It may not catch all of the existing spyware on your computer single-handedly, but it does a solid job of protecting you from new attacks. Microsoft offers automatic updates, too.</p>	A	P E M H
<p>Ad-Aware SE Personal http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/</p> <p>Ad-Aware detects and removes spyware on a user's computer and also detects dialers, trojans, data-mining, aggressive advertising, browser hijackers, and tracking components. It can perform quick scans and deep scans and detect and remove spyware and adware threats not caught by Spybot. Definition updates come out almost weekly to help keep this agent up to date.</p>	A	P E M H
<p>Spybot Search & Destroy 1.4 http://www.safer-networking.org/en/</p> <p>Spybot scans your computer system for malicious software. It is able to fix problems with cookies, your registry, ActiveX objects and browser hijackers. It also can help protect a user's privacy by deleting usage tracks. Spybot also has an "Immunize" feature which blocks the installation of spyware before it occurs. Be sure to update each time before using Spybot to scan your system.</p>	A	P E M H
<p>Spyware Doctor 3.2 http://www.pctools.com/spyware-doctor/</p> <p>PC Magazine rates Spyware Doctor as the current top application for removing spyware, beating out all the competition for version 3.2. Download the trial version to run basic scans of your system; register as a user for less than thirty dollars a year (site license (\$5K) and activate the full version for what is currently one of the best antispysware agents currently available.</p>	A	P E M H
<p>Spyware Blaster 3.3 http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/spywareblaster.html</p> <p>SpywareBlaster doesn't scan for and remove spyware, it prevents it from being installed before it can become a menace on your system. SpywareBlaster prevents the installation of ActiveX-based malware, adware, dialers and browser hijackers, and blocks tracking cookies restricting the actions of sites trying to follow your interests and activity online. SpywareBlaster also includes a System Snapshot feature so you can revert to a cleaner version of your system before malware was installed.</p>	A	P E M H
<p>WinPatrol 9.7 http://www.winpatrol.com/</p> <p>WinPatrol guards your PC's perimeter with a little Scotty-dog that barks the moment an application behaves like spyware. WinPatrol Plus service provides more detail about detected malware for a one-time \$20 payment, telling you when a product is trying to change any of the critical settings on your PC such as your registry or auto-start preferences.</p>	A	P E M H

Resource	Rating	Audience
<p>Bazooka Adware & Spyware Scanner 1.13.03 http://www.kephyr.com/spywarescanner/index.html</p> <p>Bazooka Adware and Spyware Scanner detects a multitude of spyware, adware, Trojan horses, and keyloggers, malware that many antivirus products do not address. The scanning process only takes a second and either informs you of how to uninstall the malware or puts you in contact with Bazooka's developer for the most up-to-date and safe uninstall instructions.</p>	B	P E M H
<p>Mozilla Firefox 1.0.6 http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/</p> <p>Mozilla's browsers have been around for years, and Firefox is its latest entry into the browser arena. There are installs for Windows, Mac and Linux, and all downloads are free. Because Mozilla does not have some of the advanced features of Internet Explorer, but because it is not as robust it is less susceptible to spyware and adware attack.</p>	B	P E M H
<p>Opera 8 http://www.opera.com/</p> <p>Opera's browser provides information about the identity of web sites, automatically rating each site with a level of security from 1 to 3 and listing the certificate owner of the site when the user visits a secure web site (https://). Opera can also identify the source of pop-up web sites, phishing attacks, web site spoofing, and other forms of fraudulent activity online.</p>	B	P E M H
<p>SANS Internet Storm Center http://isc.sans.org/</p> <p>Click the Survival Time link on the left-hand menu to see what kind of malicious online activity is predominant around the world. According to the actual real-time data captured by the SANS Institute, an unprotected PC connected to the Internet today will attract some sort of unwelcome advance within about 17 minutes. This site offers all kinds of timely information on current security threats online.</p>	C	P E M H
<p>HijackThis 1.99.1 http://www.merijn.org/</p> <p>HijackThis lists the contents of key areas of your registry and hard drive, areas that are used by both legitimate programmers and hijackers, and detects and removes new hijack attempts. It does not target specific programs and URLs, only the methods used by hijackers to force you onto their sites. As a result, false positives do occur and you want to be careful about what you choose to remove from your system.</p>	C	P E M H
<p>Netscape 8 http://browser.netscape.com/ns8/download/default.jsp</p> <p>My how times have changed! Netscape now features both the Firefox and Internet Explorer engines, allowing you to toggle between the two browser views. It's intuitive enough that if you visit a web site that has problems opening in the engine you're currently using, it automatically reloads the page with the other browser engine. Netscape 8 shares many of Firefox's features, including automatic pop-up blocking and tabbed browsing, which puts each open page under its own tab in the same individual window.</p>	C	P E M H

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Summary Sheet: Malware

Resource	Address	Rating	Audience
Windows Anti-Spyware Beta	http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=321cd7a2-6a57-4c57-a8bd-dbf62eda9671&displaylang=en	A	P E M H
Ad-Aware SE Personal	http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/	A	P E M H
Spybot Search & Destroy 1.4	http://www.safer-networking.org/en/	A	P E M H
Spyware Doctor 3.2	http://www.pctools.com/spyware-doctor/	A	P E M H
Spyware Blaster 3.3	http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/spywareblaster.html	A	P E M H
WinPatrol 9.7	http://www.winpatrol.com/	A	P E M H
Bazooka Adware and Spyware Scanner	http://www.kephyr.com/spywarescanner/index.html	B	P E M H
Mozilla Firefox 1.0.6	http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/	B	P E M H
Opera 8	http://www.opera.com/	B	P E M H
SANS Internet Storm Center	http://isc.sans.org/	C	P E M H
HijackThis 1.99.1	http://www.merijn.org/	C	P E M H
Netscape 8	http://browser.netscape.com/ns8/download/default.jsp	C	P E M H