

# Warning!

## You are being watched

- **What is Spyware?**

*Simply defined, **Spyware** is a computer program that gathers and reports information about a computer user without the user's knowledge or consent.*

Not long time ago business realized the potential of the Internet and web surfing then decided to take action and capitalize on this opportunity. One way to use the Internet to advertise their products is to affiliate with a website or a marketing outfit. Hence, the birth of the Adware. Adware is “freeware” programs with embedded ads. These ads will “popup” when you open the program. An example is the “Weatherbug” program that is distributed freely over the Internet. There are usually two versions of these Adware programs; one free with ads and one you register and pay for without ads.

Some website operators went a step further. **Spyware** is usually published as ‘freeware’ with a twist. **Spyware** has analysis and tracking programs that are also installed on your system when you install this ‘freeware’ program. This tracking program, we’ll call ‘agent’, collects and reports your activities to the advertiser’s website without your knowledge. As of today, **Spyware** is not illegal in any way. The problem here is that the advertisers track, collect and sell information about you and your web surfing habits ‘WITHOUT’ your knowledge and consent. That’s the problem!

- **Spyware categories**

- **Network-based Spyware programs:**

These are programs that are part of a large network system where ad serving networks pay software publishers and websites to include their ad serving programs in the published programs.

**Ad serving networks:**

DoubleClick, GAIN, Radiate, SaveNow and Web3000.

**Trojan horses and Stalking horses:**

KaZaa, Grokster, Morpheus, Limewire, AudioGalaxy, iMesh, DivX  
TopText, Cydoor, OnFlow, Medialoads, Delfin, WebHancer, New.net.

- **Stand-alone Spyware programs:**

Stand-alone programs that incorporate similar approaches have no links to ad serving networks and collect information from users.

Alexa, Hotbar, Comet Cursor, eWallet, CuteFTP, BonziBuddy.

- **Cookies:**

Cookies are still used by the two major Websurfing programs; Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer. Even though you disabled cookies in the browser settings, there is no guarantee that cookies are not being 'harvested'.

- **Spyware Threats:**

**Spyware** threats come in one or more forms such as:

- **Malware:** Modifies system settings and performs undesirable action on your computer. These can be dangerous because they can run programs that may delete important files on your computer.
- **Hijacker:** Hijacks your browser and redirects it to another website. No matter how often you change the default website, it seems to always be redirected to another website
- **Dialer:** Dials a service without your knowledge and may end up billing your telephone number
- **Trojan Horse:** A program that is attached to another possibly legitimate program. Trojan horse spyware can also perform undesirable tasks on your computer.
- **Collectware:** Collects information about you and your web surfing habits. It can even collect your keyboard strokes and steal your user ID's and passwords.
- **Back Door Agent:** These open a back door for hackers to monitor your actions and steal your information.

**What can Spyware do?**

- Perform a detailed check of your browser history.
- Install DLL's and other executable programs.
- Send continuous data to parent.
- Open back doors for hackers to enter your computer to intercept your personal data.
- Install programs on your computer.
- Read, write and delete files on your computer.
- Format the hard drive.

The majority of these programs are what we call "sticky". This means that they stick to your computer like glue. Once they are installed, they will be difficult to remove. You can not easily "delete" the program from your system. The really sneaky ones will hide even if you "successfully" remove them. Then they will pop right up, reinstall themselves and be back in business.

**Warning:**

Many **Spyware** programs can get installed on your computer with out your knowledge by simply "visiting" a website!

- **What to do about **Spyware** Threats:**

**You must purchase, install and update an anti-spyware program. Scan your system weekly or more often than weekly.**