

What is Spyware?:

Spyware is the name given to software that collects computer users' personal information without the users' willing consent or knowledge. The other terminology such as, "malware" and "adware" which have a general and different meaning may also be used instead of spyware.

Spyware software, which can perform various actions from keeping track of the key sequences the user is keying in (the script being written), keeping a record of the web sites the user visits, scanning the data on the users' hard disk, to eaves dropping the searches performed on the internet by the user which all mean a breach of secrecy of various personal information, illegally get hold of bank account passwords or impose personally aimed advertisements (pop-up windows and/or spam) which are annoying and which use up network and computer resources thus slowing them down (lag in opening up web pages on the internet, longer boot and action durations in general).

Software like spyware, since they are not openly illegal and since they are not designed for purposes that would directly pose a threat to the user, install themselves on to the computer with the user's consent or activities. In this manner (consent and not a threat) they are different from viruses. Furthermore spyware do not copy themselves from one computer to another, in some way, like viruses do. However, the consent is obtained without any clarifying explanation to the user on how this malicious software will work and perform on the computer.

The user receives a notice to install an annex (add-on, extension, plug-in) on her/his browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera etc.) on the computer in order to open up a web page or to make proper use of the page and upon giving the authorization by a click of a key the spyware may be installed. Or a web site that provides a free service (free software, music, video, on line games) may impose the software to be installed on the computer via the internet. Similarly, some free software installs spyware secretly or by trying to get the consent of the user while installing their software. Such sites or software developers sell and thus obtain a gain for having the software installed by selling the users' personal information or anonymous statistical information etc. to persons or groups who aim to advertise etc..

Safeguarding Spyware software:

The most effective way of avoiding such software is to refrain from certain user habits that cause these to spread. Authorizing all the inquiry or notice windows while surfing the internet leads to the installation of many unnecessary software. People who have higher expertise and experience stay away from problems without making use of anti-spyware software. Therefore it is imperative that a dialogue or a notice screen encountered on any web page not be authorized without really understanding what is wanted or without consulting someone who might have an insight.

Similar to many viruses spyware spread making use of the gaps in widely used operating systems or other software. So many spyware are designed to come up when surfing among web pages only with the Internet Explorer. Therefore it will be effective against many spyware to incorporate free and less aimed at browsers like Firefox or Opera instead of the Internet Explorer.

In addition to this, some free software (internet accelerator, rapid download, file sharing etc.) installs spyware along with their functionality. Even more, there are spyware installed on computers that claim that they themselves are anti-spyware software and that they will clean up the malicious

software in the computer thus deceiving the unknowing user. Before installing any such free software, the users must search on the internet to grasp what they are and whether they contain any spyware or consult for technical support from experts.

What is Anti-Spyware?:

Anti-Spyware, as the name suggests, are security software developed to protect computers from spyware. Some antivirus software are capable of protecting the computer against well-known spyware, however, anti-spyware software have specialized on removing, deleting or making obsolete the spyware and updating themselves for newly developed "spyware". Although some of these software are paid for, the two free, competent and widely used ones are recommended to our users as anti-spyware.

Windows Defender:

It is the anti-spyware software that is a product of Microsoft, developed to protect Windows operating systems from spyware and is provided free via the internet to the licensed Windows users. This software comes with the Windows Vista operating system and can also be installed on to the Windows XP operating system with the Service Pack 2 installed. This product which automatically updates itself and recognizes spyware and blocks them from appending themselves to the system, furthermore scans and eradicates those that have already been added, can be downloaded from the address below.

<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.mspx>

Those users who would like to download the software from the Microsoft site will have to follow up a few simple steps to prove that their operating system is licensed.

Furthermore, the download of the software is available at the

<ftp://ftp.cc.metu.edu.tr/Security/AntiSpyware/WindowsDefender>

address (supplying their METU staff user name and password). As performed at the Microsoft site the WindowsDefender.msi installation file will also require to check whether the operating system is licensed or not. We, however, recommend our users to use the Microsoft site as they would provide the latest updated version.

Ad-Aware:

This spyware that may be downloaded free from the address <http://www.lavasoft.de/>

is one of the best known reliable and effective anti-spyware product. The software is easily installed by following a few steps, it updates itself automatically and scans your system at regular intervals. It detects spyware at the moment of installation, prevents from making any changes on the system and blocks its installation.
