

Glossary of Spyware and Technology Terms

Adware: The term for spyware preferred and used by makers of software that include ad-serving mechanisms. Adware gathers some personal information and/or monitors a user's Web behavior to serve targeted ads. The majority of programs that use the ad-serving software disclose its existence during the installation process.

Bundled: An arrangement in which one or more software programs are included with another program, for technical reasons or because of a business partnership.

Cookie: A mechanism for storing information — such as passwords and a user's activity on a site — on your hard drive after visiting Web sites. Web sites usually use cookies to identify users and offer a more customized experience based on user preferences. But cookies also help advertisers target banner and other online ads to consumers (or ensure that users don't receive the same ads twice in a row), and users are generally not asked for permission in that process. Users may block the use of cookies by changing preferences on their Web browser.

File-sharing programs: Software applications that allow transfer of files over a public or private network. Popular commercial file-sharing programs have included music-sharing site Napster and similar applications that allowed users to browse a network for MP3 music files or software and download it.

Freeware: Software that can be downloaded and shared at no cost. However, most freeware is copyrighted so programmers cannot use it in software they are developing. Adware is an advertising-supported version of freeware.

Opt-in: An online process by which a user chooses to receive information (such as e-mail newsletters) or software, often by checking a check-box on a Web page or software installation screen.

Opt-out: An online process (such as un-checking a pre-checked box) by which a user actively chooses not to receive information, such as e-mail newsletters or software. Actively opting out will prevent a user's information from being shared with businesses.

Peer-to-peer: A method of file-sharing over a network in which individual computers are linked via the Internet or a private network. Users download files directly from other users' computers, rather than from a central server.

Shareware: Software that is distributed — usually via the Internet and or CD-Rom — for free and on a trial basis. Users are encouraged or required to pay for the software after using it for a limited time. In some cases, the shareware is free but incomplete, and users may purchase a full version.

Spyware: Software that tracks a user's Web behavior or personal information without the user's knowledge and shares this data with third parties, such as advertisers. Many Internet security experts also apply the term to information-gathering software that installs itself as part of another program, even if the bundling of software and information tracking practices

are disclosed to the consumer. These security experts, along with most privacy advocates, believe that such disclosures — which often occur in fine print on installation screens — rarely give users a thorough understanding of what information is being collected and of how a company will use it. Information-gathering software makers disagree.

Trojan-horse: Among security experts, a program that installs itself on a computer without the user's knowledge and is actively harmful to PCs by intentionally damaging PC operating systems, other software or hard drives. Many Web users apply the term to any program that surreptitiously installs others when it installs itself if the user has not actively chosen to receive all the programs.

Uninstaller: A program specifically written to remove a software program, most often included with the original program. Windows users can usually also uninstall programs through the Add/Remove Programs icon on their Control Panel. Many privacy advocates consider uninstallers that do not remove all elements of a program to be invasive.

Web bugs: A file, usually a small or invisible graphic image, that is placed on a Web page or in e-mail to allow a third party to monitor user behavior. Because users cannot see Web bugs, they are a form of spyware. Unlike cookies, Web bugs cannot be rejected by changing the settings on a Web browser.

Web-crawling services: A Web site, online program or software application that searches the World Wide Web for information, files or software programs, and which retrieves that information or those files for the user. Users generally have control of the search process, but they usually do not have the ability to limit the display of advertisements or promotions that accompany their search results — just as they do not on search engines such as Yahoo.

The biggest spyware culprit is ignorance.

Sound advice...

- Read everything about all software that you are installing.
- Run an advertisement detecting and removal program. But be sure to understand exactly what you are dealing with.
- Keep your virus program up to date.
- Use a firewall.
- Encrypt any data you wish to remain private. There is a vast array of freely available file encryption programs.
- Be vigilant during net activity.
- Delete you cookies from your temporary Internet files folder.
- Delete Cached files from your system.

