



DeBug Tech Tips

Preventing Malware and Viruses

These days, it seems malware and viruses are everywhere, how are we supposed to protect ourselves? One way is being sure to have a good antivirus and antimalware program installed, but the most effective method is watching what you click on!

Almost all malware infections come from accidentally clicking on something online. Whether it's an advertisement for a 'free antivirus program', a checkbox you missed during the latest Java update, or even a malicious popup that scared you into downloading something. These are all methods used to spread malware online, but there are some ways to reduce the likelihood of picking one up.

Be careful what you click on. Before you start clicking on things online, double check to see if it's what you *intended* to click on, or an advertisement disguised as what you want to click on. This is most prevalent on software download pages, where you might see a dozen or more download buttons. Navigating that minefield can be difficult and confusing, so take your time to check where the buttons direct to by hovering over them and taking a look in the bottom left of your browser window. If the link looks like it takes you somewhere that sounds fishy, it's most likely not the right download button.

Don't fall for popups! There are times where a window might pop up either in front or behind of the current window. Popups like this are common for advertisements, but every now and then you might come across one that makes a warning sound, starts talking to you, flashes, and beeps. It says you have a virus and you need to download this program to get rid of it! Or, your Flash or Java is out of date and you need to upgrade by **clicking here!** 99 times out of 100, these are malicious attempts to get you to download their malware. Don't trust a popup!

Install software slowly and carefully. In a lot of software these days, extra offers and programs might be included as an optional addition to the program you are trying to install. Double check every screen during a software install to see if there are any buttons or boxes to check (or uncheck!) for extras. Most of the time it will be something like "I would also like to install Weatherbug" with a check box next to it. Be sure to uncheck these extras, sometimes you get more than you bargained for.

These tips will only get you so far, however, as there are around 7,000 new malware and viruses coming out every single day! Be sure to keep a good antivirus and antimalware activated on your computer, it will protect you from everything your hard work and diligence doesn't.