

Webvalley Newsletter June 2007

Welcome to the very first copy of the Webvalley Newsletter.
In this edition: Computer Security:

*** Tips on free Virus protection.**

*** Tips on free Spyware protection.**

Virus Protection

To be simplistic: a virus is a small computer program or piece of programming code that once installed on your computer; will attempt to destroy or steal data, or take control of your computer, or take control of other computers and web sites using your computer as it's host.

If your computer is running any version of Microsoft Windows and you use the Internet, you need virus protection... it's as simple as that. Microsoft's operating systems have a number of areas that are exposed to virus threats and it is these holes that are plugged by anti-virus software. And it's no good having a virus checker that's out of date: viruses are launched onto the Internet every day, and most Anti-Virus software will update themselves each day to keep abreast of these new threats... when you connect to the Internet, your Anti-Virus software will 'phone' home to check if an update is necessary, and will then activate a small download if required.

If your computer is not connected to the Internet, your risk is greatly reduced, but remember that viruses can also be transferred to an unsuspecting host by shared disks, memory sticks, CDs, games, etc.

To help protect your computer, you need to do the following:

- * Install a good Anti-Virus product if you don't already have one. See the free software at end of this section. There is no excuse for not having one.
- * Make sure that the software is set up to do automatic updates and is always up to date.
- * Perform a complete Anti-Virus system scan on a regular basis... this weeds out any hidden viruses that may have slipped the net!
- * Do not open unexpected attachments arriving by email... even if you know the sender! Confirm with the sender.
- * Check carefully any downloads or software that a web site tries to install onto your computer automatically.
- * Be extra careful when using file sharing utilities.
- * Make sure your Firewall is fully functional and active.

If you follow these simple rules, then you stand a very good chance of keeping your computer free of viruses, and of course it also reduces the risk of Spyware.

My top 3 Free Anti-Virus software products:

AVG is probably the most popular of the free Anti-Virus software products. It has automatic updates which can be scheduled for any time and it also has a scheduled full system scan. Email scanning is standard and it has a good interface. As in all software recommendations in this issue, this software is 100% free for personal use.

AVG can be downloaded at:

<http://free.grisoft.com/doc/2>

Remember to download the free version and not the trial one!

Avast is another very popular product and is again free. A voice tells you when it has updated its database... very unnerving at first, but then it soon becomes a very reassuring message! There is no automatic full system scan, so you will have to remember to do that on a regular basis. Avast can be downloaded at:

<http://www.avast.com/eng/download-avast-home.html>

Avira is a very small and powerful product which is ideal if you have an older computer. It does display a banner when it is updating its database which can be annoying... but it is free and very fast ! Again no automatic system scanning. Avira can be downloaded at:

<http://www.free-av.com/>

If you already have a stubborn virus that you can't remove, please give us a call... we should be able to help. Telephone number is at the bottom of this email.

Spyware Protection

Spyware is different from a Virus in that its intention is to gain unauthorised access to personal data held on your computer. Spyware installs itself in exactly the same way as a virus, through an email attachment, or from a web site, or through installed rogue software. Once resident on your computer, it will lower your computer's defences allowing other malware (Spyware or Viruses) to be installed, possibly producing pornographic and other annoying advertising popups (including offers to remove Spyware: for a fee of course!!). By analysing your emails, Spyware can also submit your email address and everyone on your contact list to spammers. Spyware and Viruses can slow your computer down significantly.

Again, there are a few companies that supply software for free to help remedy this, but you must use a genuine product as there are a large number of fake ones, which are simply 100% Spyware in themselves. Don't be fooled into installing them!!

My top two recommended ones are:

Adaware from Lavasoft: a Spyware Scanner which will detect and remove any known Spyware from your computer. In its free version it does not have an 'active'

mode, so you will need to perform a scan on a regular basis. Adaware can be downloaded at:

<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/>

Remember to download the free version!

SpyBot Search&Destroy is another product which works in a very similar way. SpyBot does have a limited 'active' mode which stops you from straying onto known Spyware-active web sites. But again, it's scanner is the most valuable tool. By running both the Adaware scanner and the Spybot scanner on a regular basis will help to keep your computer free from Spyware. SpyBot Search&Destroy can be downloaded at: <http://www.safer-networking.org/en/spybotsd/index.html>

Unfortunately both scanners (and others) regard cookies as Spyware. A cookie is a small piece of information that is used by web sites to record information about your visit. This is quite normal, but some companies use these records to analyse your browsing habits, so both Adaware and SpyBot simply regard all cookies as mischievous (which may not be true in most cases).

If you find another product which you think may be good, Google it first just to make sure it is genuine... and look for reviews. A good place to start is www.download.com which reviews and checks every product on their site. NEVER install Anti-Spyware (or Ant-Virus) software if it recommends itself by way of a popup or an email!

To keep your computer free from Spyware, keep to the same strict rules as for Viruses, and you should be ok.

Ring us a ring on the number below if you have a Spyware problem you cannot fix yourself.

In the next issue of our Webvalley Newsletter, we will be looking at Firewalls and Spam avoidance (for free of course).

Back copies of all issues will be available shortly on our website www.webvalley.co.uk

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We will not use any email address for anything other than this newsletter, and we will not supply any email address to a third party. That's our promise.

If you do not wish to receive any emails from webvalley, please reply to this email with the word REMOVE in the subject line. Our apologies for the inconvenience.

Why are we doing this newsletter?

We hope you find the advice in this newsletter informative and useful. There are no hidden agendas. We simply want you to remember our name, so that in the future, if you have any computer issues or problems or requirements for support, you know where to try first... we operate a Remote Access Pay As You Go Support service between 9am and 10pm.

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PS.. we also design and publish web sites