



Is My Computer Safe? Using Anti-Virus and Anti-Spyware Correctly

Just having these programs on your computer MAY NOT be enough!

Anti-virus and anti-spyware programs are designed to keep your computer free of viruses and spyware. Most of them do this in two ways:

- running behind the scenes, constantly monitoring your computer and keeping infections from starting
- periodically scanning your hard drive to find and remove infections that may have snuck past the behind-the-scenes monitoring

Both of these methods require that your computer have the very latest anti-virus and anti-spyware files, called "definitions". These files are downloaded to your computer regularly, sometimes several times each day, when you are connected to the Internet.

Updating definition files and scanning the hard drive

Many anti-virus and anti-spyware programs can update their definition files automatically. You do not have to do very much to get these files to your computer, as long as you are connected to the Internet. Similarly, many programs will run a periodic scan of your hard drive automatically, using a schedule that you set up. The only thing you have to do is make sure your computer is turned on before the time the scan is scheduled to run.

However, not all of these programs will take care of these functions automatically. You may have to update the definition files and run the hard drive scan yourself. Which programs are automatic, and which ones require more of your involvement?

Will my program scan and update automatically?

As a general rule, if the program you use is free, it may NOT update itself automatically, nor will it run the scan of the hard drive automatically. Also, if you have a dial-up Internet connection, you may have to do a bit more to help your program update itself and scan the computer's hard drive.

For example, the following free programs require you to get the updated definition files manually: Ad-Aware, AVG anti-virus (if you have a dial-up Internet connection), avast! antivirus (if you have a dial-up Internet connection). These programs do not scan the computer's hard drive automatically; you have to start the hard drive scan manually.

PLEASE NOTE: Even if you use a program that updates itself automatically AND scans your hard drive automatically, you MUST set up a schedule for the program to perform these tasks for you. Often these programs are scheduled to run a scan or update itself at 1:00 AM. This schedule will not run you unless you leave your computer on 24 hours a day. I am not suggesting that you leave your computer on all the time; rather, you ought to change the schedules for the updates and the scan to better reflect when you use your computer. Your computer must be on (and if you have a dial-up Internet connection, connected to the Internet) before the time the update or scan is scheduled to start. Otherwise, it will not update or scan your computer until the next scheduled time.

How do I change my program's update and scanning schedule?

Every program has a slightly different way to set up or change a scheduled scan or update. You can check the program's Help menu for information about setting up a schedule. If you need additional help, please feel free to contact Silver Sage Learning directly at 720-989-4401.