

Adware

A type of software that often comes with free downloads. Some adware displays ads on your computer, while some monitors your computer use (including websites visited) and displays targeted ads based on your use.

Anti-virus Software

Protects your computer from viruses that can destroy your data, slow your computer's performance, cause a crash, or even allow spammers to send email through your account.

Bandwidth

A measure of the "speed" of an Internet connection.

Bizopps

Shorthand for "business opportunity;" some schemes involve extravagant and unfounded earnings claims and are actually fraudulent business ventures.

Bookmark

A web browser feature that allows you to save the addresses of interesting or frequently used websites, so that you can readily revisit them.

Broadband

A number of different methods used for high speed Internet access such as DSL, cable modems, fiber optics, and mobile wireless, all of which are permanently connected to the Internet through different means.

Browser

A program that allows a user to find, view, hear, and interact with material on the Internet.

Browser Hijacker

A common spyware program that changes your web browser's home page without the user's knowledge, even if you change it back.

Cache

A form of computer memory that allows you to access stored information, such as web addresses you've recently typed into your browser, more quickly. Pronounced "cash."

CAN-SPAM Act

A law that prohibits senders of unsolicited commercial email from using false or misleading header information or deceptive subject lines, and requires they identify each email as an advertisement, among other provisions.

Chat Room

The name given to a place or page in a website or online service where people can type messages which are displayed almost instantly on the screens of others who are in the "chat room."

Cookies

A small text file that a website can place on your computer's hard drive to collect information about your activities on the site or to allow the site to remember information about you and your activities.

Cyberspace

Used to distinguish the physical world from the digital, or computer-based world.

Domain

A segment of Internet space, denoted by the function or type of information it includes; current domains include ".com" for commercial sites, ".gov" for governmental ones, and ".org" for non-commercial organizations.

Download

To copy files from one computer to another over the internet.

Drive-by Download

Software that installs on your computer without your knowledge when you visit certain websites. To avoid drive-by downloads, make sure to update your operating system and Web browser regularly.

DSL

Digital Subscriber Line: A type of high speed internet using standard phone lines and the local telephone network. DSL is almost always slower than cable modem or fiber optics.

Encryption

The scrambling of data into a secret code that can be read only by software set to decode the information.

End User Licensing Agreement (EULA)

A provider's legal terms. You, as the "end user," may be required to "click" to accept before you can download software.

Exposure

When sensitive data is released to someone without authorization.

Extended Service Set Identifier (ESSID)

The name a manufacturer assigns to a router. It may be a standard, default name assigned by the manufacturer to all hardware of that model. Users can improve security by changing to a unique name. Similar to a Service Set Identifier (SSID).

Filter

Software that screens information on the Internet, classifies its content, and allows the user to block certain kinds of content.

Firewall

Hardware or software that helps keep hackers from using your computer to send out your personal information without your permission. Firewalls watch for outside attempts to access your system and block communications to and from sources you don't permit.

Gigabyte

A measure of computer memory equaling 1,024 megabytes.

Hacker

Someone who uses computers and the Internet to access other people's computers without permission.

Hardware

The mechanical parts of a computer system, including the central processing unit (CPU), monitor, keyboard, and mouse, as well as other equipment like printers and speakers.

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)

A coding language used to create documents and websites on the Internet and control how they appear.

Hidden Dialers

Programs that you may unknowingly download that can use your computer to silently dial expensive phone calls which later show up on your phone bill.

HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol)

The standard language that computers connected to the World Wide Web use to communicate with each other.

Instant Message (IM)

Technology, similar to a chat room, which notifies a user when a friend is online, allowing them to "converse" by exchanging text messages.

Internet Protocol (IP)

The computer language that allows computer programs to communicate over the Internet.

IP Address

A computer's "address," it consists of a series of numbers separated by periods.

Java

A computer programming language invented by Sun Microsystems that enables web pages to include animations, calculators, scrolling text, sound effects, and games.

JPEG

Short-hand for "Joint Photographic Experts Group," a computer file format that reduces the size of graphics by using compression.

Keystroke Logger

A device or program that records each keystroke typed on a particular computer.

LAN (Local Area Network)

A network of connected computers that are generally located near each other, such as in an office or company.

Malware

A combination of the terms "malicious" and "software," used to describe any software designed to cause damage to a single computer, server, or computer network. Criminals sometimes use malware – programs like viruses and spyware – to get into your computer, and once there, they can steal information, send spam, and commit fraud. Learn to spot the signs of malware and what you can do to reclaim your computer and your electronic information.

Monitoring Software

Programs that allow a parent or caregiver to monitor the websites a child visits or email messages he or she reads, without blocking access.

Media Access Control (MAC) Address

A unique number that the manufacturer assigns to each computer or other device in a network.

Netiquette

The informal rules of internet courtesy, enforced exclusively by other Internet users.

Network

A group of two or more computers that are able to communicate with one another.

Online Profiling

Compiling information about consumers' preferences and interests by tracking their online movements and actions in order to create targeted ads.

Operating System

The main program that runs on a computer. An operating system allows other software to run and prevents unauthorized users from accessing the system. Major operating systems include UNIX, Windows, MacOS, and Linux.

Opt-in

When a user explicitly permits a website to collect, use, or share his or her information.

Opt-out

When a user expressly requests that his/her information not be collected, used and/or shared. Sometimes a user's failure to "opt-out" is interpreted as "opting in."

P2P, Peer-to-Peer

A method of sharing files, usually music, games, or software, with other users through a sharing program that allows uploading and downloading files from other users online. Caution should be used as P2P sharing can lead to downloading dangerous as files are often misrepresented and can contain offensive material, malware, viruses, or other unintended items so trusted scanning software should always be used.

Parental Controls

Tools that allow parents to prevent their children from accessing certain Internet content that they might find inappropriate.

Personal Information

Information that can identify you, like your bank and credit card account numbers; your income; your Social Security number (SSN); or your name, address, and phone numbers.

Phishing

A scam that involves Internet fraudsters who send spam or pop-up messages to lure personal information (credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security number, passwords, or other sensitive information) from unsuspecting victims.

Pop-up Messages or Ads

Unsolicited advertising that appears as its own browser window.

RAM

Short-hand for "Random Access Memory," it's the hardware inside your computer that retains memory on a short-term basis and stores information while you work.

Router

A device that connects two or more networks. A router finds the best path for forwarding information across the networks.

Social Networking Sites

Websites that allow users to build online profiles; share information, including personal information, photographs, blog entries, and music clips; and connect with other users, whether it be to find friends or land a job.

Sock Puppet

A secret alias used by a member of an Internet community, but not acknowledged by that person.

Software

A computer program with instructions that enable the computer hardware to work. System software — such as Windows or MacOS — operate the machine itself, and applications software — such as spreadsheet or word processing programs — provide specific functionality.

Spam

Unsolicited commercial email, often sent in bulk quantities.

Spammer

Someone who sends unsolicited commercial email, often in bulk quantities.

Spam Zombies

Home computers that have been taken over by spammers without the consent or knowledge of the computer owner. The computers are then used to send spam in a way that hides the true origin.

Spyware

A software program that may be installed on your computer without your consent to monitor your use, send pop-up ads, redirect your computer to certain websites, or record keystrokes, which could lead to identity theft.

Trojans

Programs that, when installed on your computer, enable unauthorized people to access it and sometimes to send spam from it.

TRUSTe

An online seal program. websites displaying the seal have agreed to abide with certain principles regarding user privacy. You can access the site's privacy policy by clicking on the seal.

Upload

To copy or send files or data from one computer to another.

Virus

A program that can sneak onto your computer — often through an email attachment — and then make copies of itself, quickly using up all available memory.

Wi-Fi Protected Access (WPA)

A security protocol developed to fix flaws in WEP. Encrypts data sent to and from wireless devices within a network.

Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP)

A security protocol that encrypts data sent to and from wireless devices within a network. Not as strong as WPA encryption.

Wireless Network

A method of accessing high speed Internet without the computer being linked by cables.

World Wide Web

An Internet system which distributes graphical, hyperlinked information through a browser.

Worm

A program that reproduces itself over a network and can use up your computer's resources and possibly shut your system down.