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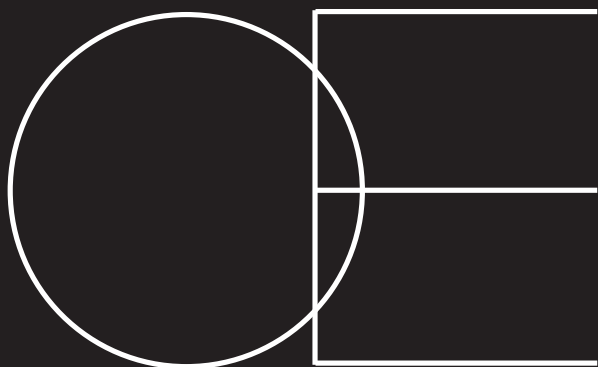
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Help! My PC's got viruses!

by Darrel Willman

Get Rid of Problems

Viruses, Trojans, corrupted Registries and other file-related problems can seriously degrade your system's performance. By far the easiest way to rid yourself of these problems is to take it into a local shop and have them clean it out and install virus protection.

Scan your Computer for Viruses and Rootkits

This article is full of links to download software that can protect and maintain your computer. But before you do, let's get rid of things that may already be there. Let's start by making sure you have some form of antivirus. Popular brands are: Norton Antivirus, Panda, AVG, McAfee, AntiVir, Trend Micro and others. If you don't recognize one of these, or are sure you don't have an antivirus, let's get one. Before you go to any other website, I recommend going to AVG.

<http://free.avg.com>

Head to this link to download and install the very good AVG free version—on the same page is their complete suite of applications for purchase.

Please note there are other free antivirus programs out there for download. Many are very good, and all will afford some protection. I am using this one because it is free and easy to install and setup. There are some recent scams regarding antivirus programs that in fact install viruses when downloaded. Check out the program you use before downloading if you are unsure of its authenticity.

Some internet service providers (mine included) also have available for customers free internet security suites for download. You may wish to check if yours does.

On the AVG page, click the link for the free version and follow through a couple pages (they want to sell you the paid version of course) to get to the download link.

Click it and "save file", then click the Desktop at the top of the list. After the download is complete, close all the windows and find the installation file you've saved out on the desktop.

Double click it to install the

program, and when asked, restart your computer. If it does not launch itself after installation, open AVG (multi-color symbol on the lower right corner of the screen-- right-click it) and under Computer Scanner, select Scan Whole Computer. Allow it to finish and delete or quarantine the items it uncovers.

With the antivirus in place and protecting you, let's look for problems it may not have found. This time, let's head to: <http://housecall.trendmicro.com>.

They sell antivirus products, but offer free online scanning and a very useful command-line application. Click the "Scan Now It's Free" link to begin. On the next page, click "Launch HouseCall Free Scan". Your browser and system may need Sun Microsystems's Java application in order to run the scan.

<http://www.java.com> is the link for getting the latest Java.

After another sales pitch, the scan will download and install updates to the antivirus definitions (what signals the program a file is a virus) that are about 1.5mb in size. On dialup systems, this may take a bit before the scan starts. While the scan runs the main window again offers more sales pitches. But it will remove any viruses and other nasties AVG has missed.

If you don't want to spend the time it takes to run the online scanner, you can alternatively get their command line application SysClean and run it from a restart to remove bugs. You can find SysClean and the antivirus/malware definition files it needs at: <http://www.trendmicro.com/download/>

Create a new folder (right-click on the Desktop anywhere and choose "New Folder") on your Desktop—name it SysClean. Now, on the download page listed, on the right-hand side near the bottom click "SysClean". Click "back" on your browser to get the definition files. Just above SysClean is "Trend Micro Pattern Files". Click this link—you want three of these: Virus Pattern File (Controlled Pattern Release), Spyware Pattern File (Controlled Pattern Release)

and ssapiptn685.zip, which is on the same page as the Spyware definition.

On the download pages, click the files under Controlled Pattern Release, they are "zipped" files. If you cannot open Zip files, go to: <http://www.7-zip.org/> and download the free expander and install it.

After downloading all of the pattern files to the desktop, place SysClean.com and the .zip files inside the SysClean folder you made previously.

Getting these three components can take a bit on slow connections. But once complete, open your new SysClean folder and expand the zipped definition files. Double-click the "SysClean" application, and when the program launches click "Scan".

Allow the program to scan and remove dangerous files from your computer. You may need to run it from Safe Mode in a command-line.

To do this, open "My Computer", and drag the SysClean folder from the desktop onto the "C" icon in the window. Restart your computer, and hold down the F8 key—choose "safe mode with command prompt". In the command line window that opens, type: `c:\SysClean\SysClean.com` then select "Scan" and let the program run. It may take quite a while depending on how large your hard drive is. It will scan the entire system and automatically remove threats, so if you have multiple drives it will take longer.

Once finished, restart your computer and enjoy—your system is safe and clean of viruses that can be found under ordinary means. By default, AVG will monitor and update itself if an internet connection is available. For more options, launch AVG and consult the built-in or online help available.

If all of this sounds a bit overwhelming, not to worry, a lot of people just want to use their computer, and not become an expert at repairing it.

Thankfully, there are experts at repairing PC's readily available. There are several good computer shops around the Lake area that can help you get through your troubles.