

## **COMPUTER VIRUS**

### **What are they**

Ones and zeroes, bits and bytes arranged into small programs. They are not alive!!! There are many different types now which have different aims, things called Trojans or adware or worms but that does not matter at all, you don't want any of them.

### **What do they do**

They install themselves onto your hard drive and then run themselves without your asking or in many cases even knowing. Of course this happens all the time on your PC, Windows reads updates, scans are performed, clear ups happen, the only difference is that these help and virus activity is usually detrimental

### **First the consequences**

Firstly a word about what a computer virus won't do.

It will not make you ill or harm you in any way.  
It will not make your PC go up in smoke.

In the real world a very bad virus spreads very slowly because it kills people before it has had a chance to spread. Highly contagious virus work best if you can still walk around and contaminate the environment and other people ( like the common cold ).

A computer virus is much the same, it is no good if it kills your PC. It is best if it sits hidden and spreads itself without you knowing that it is there. In fact the majority of modern computer virus do nothing other than spread themselves and their "harmful" aspect is the amount of traffic they spread on the internet. Chain letters and hoaxes can be just as bad but don't seem to have the same bad press.

So look on the really bad side, what is the worst thing that could happen to you as the result of a virus. You may have to re-install the software on your PC ( a couple of hours work ) and re-load your own files. ( Backing up files is important ) But this could be needed anytime if your hard disk develops a fault and you live with that every day.

### **How do they get in**

Virus potentially get in when you add anything to your PC by reading an e-mail for example or downloading a file or maybe installing a dodgy new program. The odds are small though if you are sensible and increase a thousand fold if you are not.

The biggest causes of virus spread and by far the simplest and cheapest to prevent are greed and stupidity, plain and simple. If you really think that you might have won a cruise in the Med or a new car out of the blue then think again, there is no such thing as a

free lunch. Any free gift that you are offered on-line has a catch and in some cases it's a virus.

Here are some simple rules.

Only read e-mails that come from people you know.

If you have no anti-virus software never, ever open or download an attachment.

Don't click on any unexpected buttons.

### **How to kill a virus**

A deliberate choice of words in this section title explained later.

Install a virus protection program. Don't use an anti-virus alone if you can possibly avoid it, buy an Internet Security package as this will provide much better protection against all the different virus types.

Not installing protection is stupid and is certainly a false economy, you can buy very good protection for a little as £15 per household per year. Buy a reputable product and 99% of your concerns will be taken care of without any effort on your part.

What is the biggest embarrassment about not being protected? It is when a friend calls up to tell you that your last e-mail to them contained a virus, now you are a pariah. The word spreads and no-one will open your e-mails anymore.

Now to the section title and what it means. In an ideal world there would be no virus problems but as they are pretty much unavoidable you need to be able to kill them when they arrive.

Your protection software can only deal with a virus when it is in your PC and when it does it will tell you. If the protection program produces a message saying "I have found a virus" that is a good thing, it doesn't mean you have one, it means that it is now dealt with.

Remember also that if you have protection software, everything on your PC is checked and is OK so any e-mails, attachments or downloads that have passed the checks can be considered safe to keep.

### **Conclusion**

Be sensible, install Internet Security software, keep it up to date and relax. Millions of people have never ever had a virus and most of the reported large scale attacks are in corporate networks not home PCs.