

Spyware



Who's watching you? A lot of people or companies could be if you aren't careful.



INTERNET

Spyware is software or hardware installed on a computer **without the user's knowledge** that **gathers information** about that user for later retrieval by whomever controls the spyware. Spyware can be broken down into two different categories, surveillance spyware and advertising spyware.

Advertising spyware is software that is installed alongside other software or viaactivex controls on the internet, often without the user's knowledge, or without full disclosure that it will be used for gathering **personal information** and/or showing the user ads. Advertising spyware logs information about the user, possibly including passwords, email addresses, web browsing history, online buying habits, the computer's hardware and software configuration, the name, age, sex, etc of the user.

Spyware uses the CPU, RAM, and resources of the user's computer, making the **user pay for the costs** associated with operating it. It then makes use of the **user's bandwidth** to connect to the internet and upload whatever personal information it has gathered, and to download advertisements which it will present to the user, either by way of pop up windows, or with the ad banners of ad-supported software. All of this can be considered theft in the cases of advertising spyware that installs without disclosure.

The biggest culprits in spreading spyware are the popular peer-to-peer programs available today. **Bearshare, Kazaa, Imesh, Limewire**—all of these products install multiple advertising spyware applications. Most software, or all, that advertises **download acceleration** or "smart" download capabilities is in the spyware/adware category.