



Script: What The?

Does this sound familiar? Your computer takes ages to load programs and open files. You're constantly bombarded with pop-ups. Your internet settings have changed and you don't know why. Strange things are happening to your email and online accounts.

It could be one or it could be all, but if you're experiencing any of these symptoms, it's possible that your computer has spyware - malicious software that is installed onto your computer to spy on your every move.

This guy had these problems and more...watch the clip to find out what he did to protect himself and his computer.

Brian:

Well, I download a lot of stuff to my computer, heaps of stuff actually – music, programs, games. I guess in the back of my mind I was always a bit worried about security but didn't think I could do anything about it or anything that bad could happen to me. I guess when you're connected and doing frequent downloads, you never know what's coming down the phone line.

One day I downloaded this particular program, and after that my computer seemed to be a lot slower. It was taking ages for pages to load, and even normal things like writing an email or writing a word document would take a long time. I didn't think too much of it cos my computer was getting pretty old and had heaps of stuff on it.

But then my homepage was changed to a 'free downloads site', and when I checked my internet settings I found that they'd all been changed. But things kept on getting worse. Whenever I went online to the internet I got bombarded with pop-ups and like my computer would just crash and I'd have to manually reset it.

But then things got really serious. I couldn't log into my email account, and I discovered that someone was using my internet banking. I had anti-virus software installed onto my computer but it just wasn't picking up anything.

What I didn't realise at the time was that when I downloaded this free program a couple of months ago, a smaller program downloaded and installed itself onto my computer. But I had no idea.

This spyware program monitored all my internet activity, and a key-logger recorded all the keystrokes I made on the computer, such as my login, my passwords, and all the emails I sent to my mates. It then sent all this information to the software developer.

I ended up taking my machine to a computer specialist who was able to find and remove all the spyware. I had to contact my bank and my ISP to change my account details.

You know, even free stuff comes at a cost nowadays, and I know this sounds corny, but if it's too good to be true then it probably is.



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Before I download anything now, I make sure there's no adware or spyware associated with it and I read the user agreement statements.

There are websites online that sort of help you with this and can offer great reviews and advice on the programming company that you're downloading from.

And it's not just downloads that you have to be careful of. Emails asking you for your username and password are 'phishing' emails designed to trick you into giving away your personal information.

If you ever get an email and you don't know who it is from, just delete it. And never reply to junk mail – it just tells the sender that your email address is real.

When people say that nothing in life comes for free, it's true... even on the internet.