

Viruses – What Are They?

What is a virus?

A computer virus is a small program written to alter the way a computer operates, without the permission or knowledge of the user. A virus must meet two criteria: 1) It must execute itself. It will often place its own code in the path of execution of another program and 2) It must replicate itself. For example, it may replace other executable files with a copy of the virus infected file. Viruses can infect desktop computers and network servers alike.

Some viruses are programmed to damage the computer by damaging programs, deleting files, or reformatting the hard disk. Others are not designed to do any damage, but simply to replicate themselves and make their presence known by presenting text, video, and audio messages. Even these benign viruses can create problems for the computer user. They typically take up computer memory used by legitimate programs. As a result, they often cause erratic behavior and can result in system crashes. In addition, many viruses are bug-ridden, and these bugs may lead to system crashes and data loss.

What is a Trojan horse?

Trojan Horses are impostors--files that claim to be something desirable but, in fact, are malicious, the code they contain, when triggered, can cause loss, or even theft, of data. For a Trojan horse to spread, you must, invite these programs onto your computers--for example, by opening an email attachment or downloading and running a file from the Internet.

What is a worm?

Worms are programs that replicate themselves from system to system without the use of a host file. This is in contrast to viruses, which requires the spreading of an infected host file.

What is a virus hoax?

Virus hoaxes are messages, almost always sent by email, that amount to little more than chain letters. Some of the common phrases used in these hoaxes are: "If you receive an email titled [email virus hoax name here], do not open it!", "Delete it immediately!" and "This virus was announced today by [reputable organization name here]".

What can I do to protect my computer?

Install the latest version of reliable anti-virus software. There are many good programs, including Norton, McAfee or PC-cillin. Once you have installed anti-virus software, be sure you keep the program updated. This means you must download updates each and every week! Then, be sure you scan all floppy diskettes and email attachments before you open them. Also, make sure to install all recommended Windows Updates.

What if I get a virus?

If your computer is behaving strangely, or if you think your computer has a virus, use an anti-virus program to find out. If your computer is infected with a virus, DON'T PANIC! Use an anti-virus program to remove the virus yourself, or turn your computer off and call for help.

About Desktop Resources, Inc.

Desktop Resources, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Tony Schafer, and is a leader in helping organizations couple their business initiatives with the technology to address those needs. DRI's "InformIT" managed services offerings proactively manage client infrastructure and strive to prevent problems before they occur. For more details, contact DRI at (317) 596-3650 or <http://www.DesktopResources.com>