

**Viruses.**  
**by**  
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I fix computers for a living. I'm always getting asked how to avoid viruses and spyware.

There is one way to keep viruses and spyware off your computer: **Never, ever ever get on the Internet.** However, that isn't really practical, and not very fun either. Why people get computer viruses and spyware:

**#1/FILE SHARING SITES.** KAZAA and LIMEWIRE are the two I see most. Whenever I see these programs on a PC, I know the computer is trashed and I'll be taking it to get reformatted. Listen to me now:

**THERE IS NOTHING FREE ON THE INTERNET.**

No one wants to give you anything free, ever. Why should they? If you get "free" music, you pay for it when you get that one "music" file that is really loaded with viruses or spyware. Your PC will be trashed. Plus, no matter how rich the record companies are, downloading illegal songs is STEALING. I mean, come on already.

**#2/PORN.** Don't go to porn sites. Don't look for "free" porn or anything else. Porn sites deposit more than one kind of filth on your computer.

*Note: Porn does not find your computer by accident. Somebody's been looking, even if it was one time out of curiosity. And, no one will admit it. Ever. Stop looking at porn.*

**#3/GAME CHEAT SITES.** If you can't play a video game without cheat codes and hints, don't play it. Many game cheat sites will drop spyware on your hard drive.

**#4/EMAIL.** 90% of all email is garbage. I have three words for you: DELETE, DELETE, DELETE. Almost every email you get is useless. No one from Nigeria wants to deposit money into your account. No one wants to help you lose weight or grow hair on your head. Don't read these emails, and turn off the "preview pane" in your email program. If it has **FW:** on it, delete it, no matter who it's from.

**#5/INDISCRIMINANT SURFING.** Don't click that link unless you know where it goes. Look at the URL in the status bar on the bottom of your browser. If it looks fishy, don't click it. If you aren't sure, don't click it. If it's an IP address, i.e. <http://123.456.789.123/site.html> don't click it. Set your favorite search engine's preferences to "safe surfing" or whatever they offer, let them help you keep the bad results off your screen, and be careful before clicking. Be careful when looking for ringtones, coupons, and song lyrics.

**But Dan, I have the latest and greatest anti-virus software!** Doesn't matter. Antivirus software is like a seat belt. If you drive your car off a cliff, seat belts don't matter. I've cleaned plenty of machines with the "latest and greatest" protection software. It's all in where you click.