

Tip 2

Install anti-virus software and keep it updated

A virus can be transmitted through email attachment, by downloading infected programs from websites, or through an infected floppy disk or CD. Some viruses have been programmed to remain dormant for extended periods.

Anti-virus software should be installed on your computer to protect it against known viruses, worms and trojans. Anti-virus software scans and removes threats such as these that your computer may have contracted. The software can also be set to automatically scan disks for malicious code.

What you can do

The best way to prevent viruses, worms and trojans from infecting your computer is to:

- ensure that you install both firewall (see tip 3) and anti-virus software
- ensure that you have up-to-date anti-virus software installed on your computer
- ensure that all security patches for operating systems and application software on your network are up-to-date
- use caution when working with files from unknown or questionable sources
- not open email attachments if you do not recognise the sender
- ensure you scan the attachment with anti-virus software before opening it
- only download files from reputable Internet sites, and be wary when exchanging files with friends
- never click on hyperlinks in emails received from unknown sources

Further information

Detailed information is available on the security website developed by the Internet Industry Association: www.security.iaa.net.au

The Australian Computer Emergency Response Team (AusCERT) provides free alerts on computer viruses to small businesses. Information about the AusCERT National IT Alert Service can be found at: www.national.uscert.org.au

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What is a virus?

A computer virus is a program or piece of code that is loaded onto your computer without your knowledge or permission. Once loaded onto your computer, a virus is capable of reproducing itself by travelling from file to file and from computer to computer, often destroying information files in the process.

What is a worm?

A worm is a computer program that replicates itself and spreads from machine to machine across the Internet. Like viruses and Trojans, worms are a form of malicious code which may perform some harmful function in the process on infected machines. Worms often spread by exploiting software vulnerabilities in operating systems and applications software.

What is a trojan horse?

A trojan horse, as the name implies, secretly carries often-damaging software in the guise of an innocuous email attachment. The file attachment name itself is normally misleading to entice you to open it. When the attachment is opened the program can do all sorts of things, from erasing files to changing your desktop, or installing a keystroke logger that can monitor every letter you type.

What is malicious code?

Malicious code is software designed to damage the user's data, steal information or compromise the ability to use the computer. It is often hidden as a trojan.