



ANSWER QUEST TIP SHEET

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INVASION! WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!

It's happening. Right this very minute and you probably don't even know it. I bet you that right this second there is some software you have installed on your computer that is waiting to either pop up an advertisement or is tracking your internet usage patterns to show you ads pertaining to your surfing habits. Some of these even transmit information back to their companies (this type of software is called "spyware"). Or it could be waiting to use your computer as a distribution center of content.

You are saying "No, they can't do that!" Well, yep. They can and they did if you downloaded a free software called Kazaa anytime since the fall of 2001.

Kazaa isn't the only one, there are others too. But since this was just brought to my attention, let's just talk about how they did it.

Let me explain. The Kazaa software allows you to "share" files with other people. Your computer becomes a "host" that others can take files from and in turn their computers are also a "host" for you to take files from. It is free software you can download from popular shareware sites (like <http://download.com>).

Along with their software, Brilliant Digital Entertainment (<http://www.brilliantdigital.com/>) was hired by the makers of Kazaa to install a program that showed users advertisements while they were using the Kazaa software (that's why it was "free" because you had to watch ads while you were using it). That part is okay, it's common practice.

What they didn't know was the owners of Kazaa secretly allowed Brilliant Digital to install another unknown software to your computer!

Brilliant Digital announced a few days ago that in about 4 weeks, it was going to "turn on" this secret software on all 20 million computers running the free Kazaa software. This "new" software (that you did not agree to download) will do basically the same thing BUT for a price.

Brilliant Digital said it's an OPT-IN program, meaning you don't have to run it but the issue here is not whether you want to or not; the issue is they never told you they were going to install this software to begin with.

You can read more about this at CNet's and NY Time's sites:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/03/technology/03MUSI.html?ex=1018501200&en=99a7c829cf13b8ca&ei=5001&partner=YAHOO>
- <http://news.com.com/2100-1023-873181.html>

It's almost like letting someone into your home for a visit only to find out later they installed a monitoring device that tells them every magazine, book, TV show you are watching!

The Brilliant Digital people say "We will turn it on but customers have the right to refuse to run it." Yeah, and how many people are going to click "OK" because they think it's part of the Kazaa software.

So how are you going to stop someone from installing software on your PC without your permission?

Well, there is no solution (I'm sorry I had to say this). No one knew this was going on. That's why you see disclaimers all over that say "download at your own risk."

Go to <http://news.search.com/search?q=brilliant+digital> to see all the articles pertaining to this on CNet.com. It has an article describing how to uninstall the software from Brilliant Digital.

There are software programs out there that help to block or remove unwanted ad-ware and other programs from your system. I just recently got hit by the GATOR ad-ware program (it came from a tutorial I installed even though I'm 99.9% sure I told it NOT to install it).

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Some of the big companies, like Symantec, offer software that helps you to filter out ads and other things.

Symantec's Norton Internet Securities is great! BUT! Yes, there's a but. Don't go running out to buy it if you don't have a fairly new and fast PC. It works great on my Athlon 1GHz PC with 256 mb RAM but it errors out all the time on my little AMD-2 500 MHz PC with 128 mb RAM. (If you need help determining what kind of PC you have, let me know.)

You can find out more information about this program at their website: http://www.symantec.com/sabu/nis/nis_pe/ (this package includes Norton AntiVirus so it really is a nice bundle).

It does take some time to set it up after you have installed it. You have to "teach" it what is acceptable and what is not. One great feature is the ability to never see ads on your web pages! Although a few do slip by, you basically see the good content of the website but the ads are blanked out.

One other feature that is invaluable is the Live Update. You just set it and forget it, basically. Although it recommends running it manually once in a while to make sure there isn't any updates to the Live Update program. This feature will automatically update your anti-virus definitions and the internet security options (new viruses and security risks are found every day).

You want to have this software even if you have something like the Norton Internet Securities. I had turned off Norton Internet Securities because of something I was testing, and forgot to turn it back on. BAM! When I installed that tutorial, I got attacked by that GATOR!

Stay safe!

If you are on cable modem or DSL, you might want to get this (since you are always on the internet). But remember my warning: **YOU HAVE TO HAVE A FAST ENOUGH SYSTEM TO HANDLE IT OR IT WILL NOT WORK VERY WELL!**

The minimum system requirements on their website states: Intel Pentium 150 MHz or higher processor with 48 MB recommended. Even just the anti-virus portion of this software installed on my 500 MHz sometimes causes me "spool32" errors when trying to print.

Okay, so let's move on. What happens if something HAS slipped by (like my nasty experience with GATOR)?

You can download a program called "Ad-Aware" from <http://www.download.com> (or any other shareware site you happen to like). When you visit Download.com, search for ad-aware (exactly like that, searching for ad aware without hyphen will not find it).

Download and install Ad-Aware. (If you need help, let me know.)

The first time I ran this program, all I did was tell it SCAN NOW! And guess what? It not only found GATOR but found several other little hidden ad-ware programs on my system! I told it to clean them off immediately!



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