Definition

- Any program created to modify, destroy, or steal information, use up resources on a computer or network, or allows unauthorized access to your computer.

- It can be spread by email, infected floppy disks, instant messages, file-sharing services, and pop-up ads.

Types of Malicious Code

Virus:

- A small program written to alter the way a computer works without the permission or knowledge of the user or owner. It infects or attaches itself to other computer programs to perform malicious or mischievous acts, such as, erasing or editing files, or locking up systems. A virus must execute and replicate itself.

Worm:

- A self-propagating computer virus embedded in a file that creates copies of itself, which in turn create even more copies as they travel through a computer network and/or across the internet by various means, usually email.

Trojan Horse:

- Imposters that appear harmless, but when executed, can launch a virus or worm. Trojans may also be hidden inside another program, so when the innocent program is installed, the Trojan program is also installed. Once installed on the victim's computer, the other party is notified each time the victim is online. The remote attacker then has virtually unlimited access to most aspects of the victim's computer, allowing him to access personal information and files and have control of the victim's computer. Unlike a virus or worm, a Trojan does not replicate itself and you have to "invite" it onto your computer, usually by opening an email attachment or downloading a file from the internet

Spyware:

- Software that hides on your computer with the purpose of collecting your personal information and computer activities, and reporting them back to the one who distributed the spyware. Ex: credit card numbers, email addresses, home addresses, surfing habits, etc. Spyware may be present on 90% of all internet-connected computers.

Adware:

- A close relative of spyware, is software that downloads to your computer to play, display, or download advertising material to a computer. It slows down you computer and often contains inappropriate content.

A Computer May be Infected If:

- Pop-up adds appear when you are not connected to the internet.
- Your browser home page has changed without your consent.
- A new toolbar is present on your browser.
- Icons appear on your desktop.
- Your computer takes longer than usual to complete certain tasks.
- Your computer crashes without warning.

Prevention

- Regularly update your antivirus and antispyware software.
- Do not open emails or attachments from people you don't know.
- Always scan email attachments before opening them.
- Always read the user agreements, privacy statements, or other disclaimers before downloading or installing programs.
- Make sure your browser security settings are set to medium or high. To do this, while on the internet, go to the menu bar, click on "Tools", select "Options", then click on the "Security" tab.
- Backup all important files and programs onto disks or CDs.
- Use strong passwords with letters and numbers. Don't share your passwords with others, don't save them in a file on the computer, and don't have your browser remember them.
- Use a firewall to further protect your computer.
- Avoid giving your social security number out online.

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Internet Safety

Malicious Code