

Useful Links to PC-based Utilities for your Home Computer:

Did you know that as a Simmons student you are able to download Sophos Antivirus software, at no cost, from the college's Technology web site? Once it is downloaded and installed, this software package will keep your computer protected from the latest virus threats by automatically updating the virus definitions on a weekly basis. It is recommended to scan your hard drive for viruses at least once every 2 weeks. The software is available to download at this site:

<http://my.simmons.edu/services/technology/helpdesk/antivirus/disinfect-protect/>

For even more extensive anti-viral protection, please visit the Panda Software web site, where a free online virus scan is available. This tool is an extremely thorough virus checker and will scan your hard drive for viruses, automatically detect any threats, disinfect, and remove them immediately. The online virus scan can be accessed at this site:

http://www.pandasoftware.com/activescan/com/activescan_principal.htm

Just click **Scan Your PC** and follow the series of prompts, answering a few basic questions, and the scan will start. It should take about 20 minutes, depending on the size of your hard drive. If any viruses are found, it will alert you of them and removal of the virus is automatic. This is a great and free tool, which should be run at least once a month.

Are you being inundated by annoying pop-up windows or are new toolbars appearing in your web browser that you have not installed? If these situations apply to you or if your computer has recently begun running slowly for no apparent reason, your PC might have become infected with spyware. According to a definition from webopedia.com, spyware is "any software that covertly gathers user information through the user's Internet connection without his or her knowledge, usually for advertising purposes. Once installed, the spyware monitors user activity on the Internet and transmits that information in the background to someone else. A common way to become a victim of spyware is to download certain peer-to-peer file swapping products that are available today." Getting rid of spyware is usually relatively easy to do and there are 2 recommended tools which should be run in order to scan and remove all traces of unwanted spyware from your PC.

Ad-Aware is a thorough spyware removal tool and is a free download that is available at this site:

<http://www.lavasoft.com/>

The LavaSoft website contains useful information about spyware and computer security. You can download Ad-Aware Personal for free at the site above, or download directly via the link below:

<http://www.download.com/3000-2144-10045910.html?part=69274&subj=dlpage&tag=button>

After installing it, you should run the program and be sure to update it with the current data files once every week. Ad-Aware will then check your PC for the most recently discovered spyware threats.

Another spyware removal tool is called SpyBot Search and Destroy and should be used in addition to Ad-Aware. When the 2 programs are both used to scan a system (one after the other, not at the same time), it will ensure the removal of most spyware instances. You can download and learn more about SpyBot at this web site:

<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/spybotsd/>

SpyBot Search and Destroy is also available for direct download via the following link:

http://www.download.com/Spybot-Search-Destroy/3000-8022_4-10289035.html?tag=lst-0-2

Once again, after installing this program, make sure to keep it updated with the latest data files, which is usually done automatically and it is recommended that you update the software each time you run the program. You may be warned of conflicts for having both Ad-aware and Spybot installed on your PC, but the combination of results found by both will ensure that malicious spyware is removed.

After making certain that your computer is virus and spyware free, it should be running at a more efficient rate, however, if you still notice slow or decreased performance, it may be time to invest in some additional memory (RAM) or if the computer is an older model, a new one can be purchased for very reasonable educational prices.

If you have any questions about your computer or need assistance purchasing a new one, please ask any of the GSLIS Technology Group staff in P-213 or send an email to gslislab@simmons.edu.