

THE WEEKLY GEEK



ISSUE 11: FALL 2012

Welcome to The Weekly Geek

This is a new e-newsletter from the Information & Instructional Technology Departments at Dakota County Technical College. Each week will have a different technology related topic.

Computers may not stay awake at night with a hacking cough or go through a box of Kleenex with a little snotty nose...but they can get sick. This week, The Weekly Geek is providing a rundown on some of the common types of cooties that can make your computer not feel or work so well.

Malware is an overall term for computer programs that are intended to gather information, gain access or cause damage to computer systems. Malware can take many different forms and there are millions of variations.

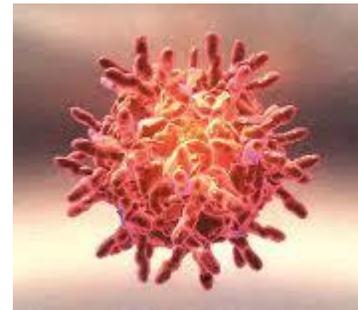


Virus

The term **virus** is often used as a general term for a computer bug. In reality, a computer virus can be differentiated from other computer creepers in the way they are spread.

If you want to compare a computer virus to a cold virus...they are sort of spread the same way.

A person with cold virus....cough into their hand...shakes your hand...you rub your lip...and now you are sick too.



Computer has a virus...user doesn't know it...creates a file...virus attaches itself to the file...user sends file as attachment in email to others...others open file...computer virus finds new home on their computer.

You can think of anti-virus software as the Lysol or hand sanitizer for the computer. Anti-virus programs can detect the presence of viruses and stop them before they spread.

Worms

Computer worms are very similar to viruses in the way they spread from file to file on a computer. Worm programs spread not only on the infected computer, but also to computers that are networked together. For example, if a computer had a worm malware program, it could find its way to the network shared drives and then to all the computers that are also connected to the network drives.





Trojan Horse or Trojan

You know that kind of person that you meet and they seem like they are awesome at first, so you start to trust them and befriend them and then they turn around and stab you in the back...yeah that's what a "Trojan Horse" program is like.

It is a piece of software that pretends to be something useful and cool, but behind the scenes it is wreaking havoc with your computer. Some may just be annoying and install pop-ups or hijack your homepage, others are more vicious and replace needed files or delete files on your computer.

Most of the time a Trojan is not spread from computer to computer by hiding in common file attachments sent in email or working its way through a network. Trojans hide in installers of software found

online.

The worst part of a Trojan is that the little buggers like to hide, and they are hard to detect and remove from systems. (Also sometimes called a **rootkit**)



Spyware

Spyware is a type of malware that collects information from a computer without a user's knowledge. It could be little information like what you search for online or the websites you visit or it could be big information like passwords, account numbers, and other private information.

"Hey Weekly Geek – this is too much reading don't you have a 2 minute video to show me instead?"

Why yes! Thank you for asking...here is a [2 minute video from Google that explains malware](#)

Also a quick [resource guide on Malware and online safety](#) from the all-wise and knowing Google

Think you already know a lot about malware? Check out these quizzes from InfoWorld:

[Malware Quiz 1: Are you a cyber sleuth?](#)

[Malware Quiz 2: Malware IQ test](#)

Recommended Free Software:

[MalwareBytes](#)

[CCleaner](#)