

Top 10 Security Threats

10. Spam Mail

While it's annoying, it's not a security threat unless it comes with a malicious payload. Your e-mail service may filter out spam automatically. If not, Outlook's built-in "Junk E-Mail" filter is as effective as the spam protection in many suites.

9. Phishing Mail

Phishing messages pretend to be from eBay, PayPal, your bank, or the like. If you log in to their fake sites, they steal your username and password and you're sunk. However, both IE7 and Firefox 2 have Phishing detection built in.

8. Wireless Attack

If you're not careful, anybody in range can mooch bandwidth from your wireless **network** and can rummage through your files, because they're inside your network. Your router's WPA/WEP encryption can stop the mooching—but you have to use it.

7. Hacker Attack

Hackers don't care about your puny computer enough to attack it directly. They might broadcast a network virus or release a Trojan, but a personal attack is highly unlikely. Your security suite's firewall and malware protection should keep you safe.

6. Web Exploits

Some Web sites include malicious code to exploit vulnerabilities in your browser or operating system. Just visiting the site can infect or damage your system if the vulnerability hasn't been patched, so keep Automatic Updates on.

5. Adware

Simple adware pops up ads that get in your face. More sinister adware shadows your online activity, phones home, and tailors ads for you. Up-to-date antispyware is the solution.

4. Viruses

Viruses are insidious. They hide and use your computer to infect other computers. At some predefined point they strike. Modern antivirus programs are quite good, but add a non-signature anti-malware program to help with brand-new threats.

3. Spyware/Trojans

Spyware spies on everything you do and steals private information. **Trojan horse** programs pretend to be useful but can turn your computer into a spam-spewing zombie. Antispyware plus non-signature anti-malware should keep out these threats.

2. Identity Theft

It's not just about your computer when they use your **credit cards**, divert your paycheck, and change your vehicle registration. A full-powered security suite should block all computer-related avenues for identity theft.

1. Social Engineering

The number one threat to your computer's security is—you! Use common sense. Don't take programs from strangers, don't go to "iffy" Web sites, and if your security software pops up a warning, READ IT before you click.