

THIS & THAT

by
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This time, I thought I would try to explain (define) a few odd ball terms used to name some Internet stuff. Computer technology is responsible for adding tons of new terms to the vocabulary of words we toss around every day in normal conversation.

I've found over time, that not everyone is willing to stop someone who uses a new word to ask what it means. You can tell when this happens when you see a blank stare on the face of the listener, and then a quick attempt to change the subject. This time, I've picked several of these words, which are used in conjunction with the Internet, to define.

Blog - This word is used to name a type of web page found on the Internet. The word blog is derived by taking parts of two other words; Web, and log. A blog is a Web page that serves as a publicly accessible personal journal for an individual. Typically updated daily, blogs often reflect the personality of the author. These Web pages provide us with a way to type in our thoughts regarding a topic (usually limited to the subject of the Web site itself), and have those thoughts added to the list of comments others have typed on the subject. Those comments, then, become a log of comments expressed by those who find and accesses the site (the Blog). Not all Blogs are

totally public. The site owner determines how open the site will be when it's set up. For more on this word, use Google to search on the word Blog.

Phish (pronounced *fish*) - This word describes the act of sending an e-mail to someone falsely claiming to be an established legitimate enterprise in an attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information that will be used for identity theft. These e-mails direct the user to visit a Web site where they are asked to update personal information, such as passwords and credit card, social security, and bank account numbers, that the legitimate organization already has. The Web site, however, is bogus and set up only to steal the user's information. For example, 2003 saw the proliferation of a phishing scam in which users received e-mails supposedly from eBay claiming that the user's account was about to be suspended unless he clicked on the provided link and updated the credit card information that the genuine eBay already had. Because it is relatively simple to make a Web site look like a legitimate organizations site by mimicking their Web code, the scam counted on people being tricked into thinking they were actually being contacted by eBay and were subsequently going to eBay's site to update their account information. By spamming large groups of people, the "phisher" counted on the e-mail being read by a percentage of people who actually had listed credit card numbers with eBay legitimately.

To avoid this type of e-mail problem, make it a practice NOT to click on anything in a email you are, at all, unsure of.

Spam - Electronic junk mail. Some people

define spam even more generally as any unsolicited e-mail. However, if a long-lost brother finds your e-mail address and sends you a message, this could hardly be called spam, even though it's unsolicited. Real spam is generally e-mail advertising for some product or service. When this kind of letter is sent through the U.S. Post Office, we refer to it as *junk* mail.

Trojan Horse - This is a destructive program that masquerades as a benign application (program). Unlike viruses, Trojan horses do not replicate themselves but they can be just as destructive. One of the most insidious types of Trojan horse is a program that claims to rid your computer of viruses but instead introduces viruses onto your computer.

The term comes from the a Greek story of the Trojan War, in which the Greeks give a giant wooden horse to their foes, the Trojans, ostensibly as a peace offering. But after the Trojans drag the horse inside their city walls, Greek soldiers sneak out of the horse's hollow belly and open the city gates, allowing their compatriots to pour in and capture Troy.

Spyware - Any software (program) that covertly gathers user information through the user's Internet connection without his or her knowledge, usually for advertising purposes. Spyware applications are typically bundled as a hidden component of freeware or shareware programs that one can download from the Internet; however, it should be noted that the majority of shareware and freeware applications do not come with Spyware. Once installed, the Spyware monitors your computer activity on the Internet and transmits that information in the background

to someone else. Spyware can also gather information about e-mail addresses and even passwords and credit card numbers.

Spyware is similar to a Trojan horse in that users unwittingly install the program when they install something else.

Adware - A form of Spyware that collects information about the user in order to display advertisements in the Web Browser based on the information it collects from the user's browsing patterns.

Pop-ups - A window that suddenly appears (pops up) when you select an option with your mouse or press a special function key. Usually, the pop-up window contains a menu of commands and stays on the screen only until you select one of the commands. It then disappears.

These pop-ups become a problem when they are programmed to continually *pop-up* windows over anything you are doing with your computer. This type of pop-up is unwanted and needs to be eliminated. Free programs such as Lavasoft's Adaware search your computer for these rogue programs and eliminate them.

Virus - A program or piece of program code that is loaded onto your computer without your knowledge and runs against your wishes. Viruses can also replicate themselves. All computer viruses are manmade. A simple virus that can make a copy of itself over and over again is relatively easy to produce. Even such a simple virus is dangerous because it will quickly use all available memory and bring the computer to a halt. An even more dangerous type of virus is one capable of transmitting itself across networks and bypassing security systems.

There are many excellent programs out there that you can use to protect you computer from Viruses, Trojan Horses, Syware, Adware, Phish and Spam. Some of the companies offering protection programs are: Symantec (Norton), Mcafee, Mailwasher, Spybot, Spyware Doctor, and Lavasoft's Adaware.

For more on these terms, type them into the search box on the search engine Google, which is found at <http://www.google.com>.

Note: Material used in the definitions provided here was taken, in part, from the <http://www.webopedia.com> Web site.