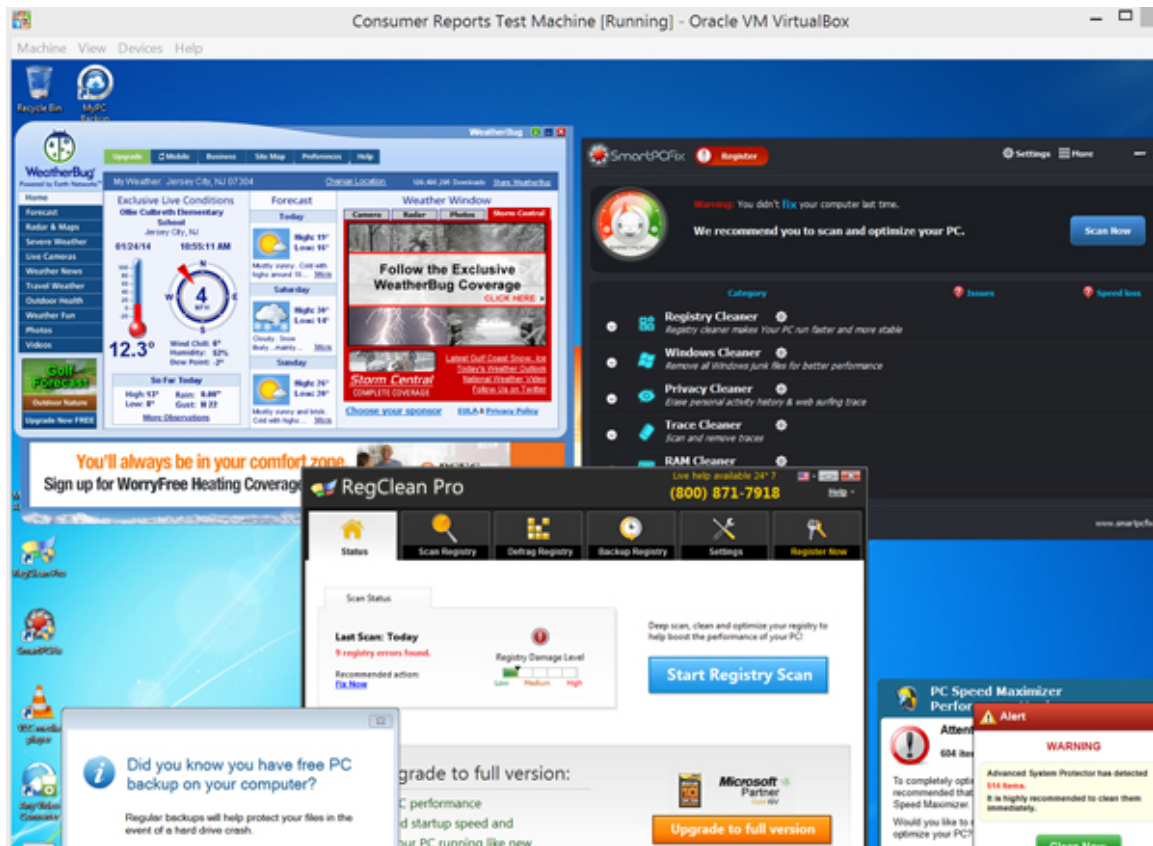


How to Avoid Installing Unnecessary Software



One of the most frequent situations I encounter is a computer filled with “crapware”, turning even the most powerful computer into something slightly faster than a turtle. We all like a good deal, and the Internet provides a large treasure trove of free software. Many of these free programs are outstanding and often indispensable (e.g., iTunes, Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash, Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Java, etc), but others (such as the ones shown in the screen above) are unnecessary and only serve to drag your computer down. Not only do unwanted applications get into your computer, but web browser toolbars and search engines grow like weeds, and browser home pages get reset. But, how does all this “gunk” get into your computer in the first place?

From the Computer Manufacturer

Often when you buy a brand new computer, you will notice that trial or sample software will be preinstalled. A good example is Norton antivirus. One of the first things you should do after your new computer is up and running is look at all the installed programs and uninstall the ones you don't want.

From the Installation Program

Even reputable software vendors need revenue, so you have to pay attention to

options that appear when running the installation program. Often, there will be a checkbox (checked of course) selecting additional (and often unwanted) third party software. Be sure to uncheck the boxes or say no if asked if you want to install other software.

From Sponsored Ads

These often appear as a result of searching for your desired software. You should avoid clicking the ads that result from your search and click on the legitimate search results instead. Whenever possible, go directly to the source to get your software (e.g., adobe.com, apple.com, java.com) and read the URL that you are about to click on to ensure it is from the source. If you want to get software from smaller developers, than Cnet's Download.com, SourceForge.net, Tucows, or FileHippo.com should be safe. But, still watch those checkboxes!

From Express Install

Sometimes an installation program will offer you an Express Install and a Custom Install. Always pick the Custom Install and double check that you are installing only what you really want.

Even with all your precautions, you might still end up with unwanted software. Even legitimate sites push toolbars and some other unwanted program, or attempt to change your default home page or search engine. Check your list of installed programs, browser extensions, and browser search engines every month or so and uninstall anything you don't want. If you aren't sure if you need it, try searching for it before you uninstall it.

This newsletter, as well as all past newsletters, can be found on my web site (<http://steve.gimnicher.com>).