

Why you should not download software

SPYWARE or a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: This is the type of software that you may intentionally or inadvertently download. This can come in the form of an Internet Toolbar, Date Manager, Weather Bug, WeatherChannel Desktop, Dancing Flowers, Internet Coupons, etc. Often times, a pop-up window will ask if you want to install a specific feature or tool. Many times, it is implied that you cannot continue if you do not install this feature. If the site prevents you from moving forward in it because you won't install it, then don't use the site.

The Danger of these sites is this: You didn't pay for the software and their only method of compensation is to send you lots of ads in hopes that you will buy something. Additionally, they will share your information with others who will also send you ads. All of these work by getting you to download and install software that tells them when you are online. With this kind of access, malicious sites have taken over folks Internet (known as Hijacking) or have installed items that prevent you from surfing the rest of the net. Furthermore, when you get tired of these pieces (a great example is WeatherBug), they can be very difficult to uninstall. If you feel that you need to be in tune with up-to-the-minute weather or news, please go visit the weather or news site. Do not install applications that supply it to your desktop.

Screen Savers and Wallpaper: Yes, I know they look pretty. But again, most folks aren't paying for them. And I suspect even if you did pay for them, they would still send you advertisements and pop-ups.

You may load digital images of your choice (friends, family, etc) and use them as a wallpaper or screensaver, WITHIN REASON. You may NOT use your assigned computer to store your personal digital images. You may not subscribe to Internet services that download this material to your desktop.

The Danger of this is that some of them install software that allows them to know when you are online. They may start out appearing to be a forthright and reliable company, but they may eventually give way to selling your email address, and letting others know when you are online as well.

Instant Messenger (Chat Software): These are tools such as Yahoo Instant Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Instant Messenger, etc. I know some of you use these tools to keep in touch with your children who are away at college. Unfortunately, there are a number of vulnerabilities associated with this software and the time has come to disallow its use. If you feel that you need to keep in touch with someone, please give them your cell number or your classroom phone.

The Danger This software can be used to deliver viruses, worms and other attacks to your computer. By the nature of this software, as soon as you turn on your machine, it knows that you are "live" and sends this information all over the world looking for your "buddies." Without your knowledge, it can start performing malicious tasks on your machine.

"Joke of the Day" websites: Everyone likes a good laugh to lighten the work load. At some point or another, everyone sends a joke on to share with friends. While many of these are harmless, I ask that you consider the appropriateness of the content when

sending or receiving these messages via your school email. Your email represents you professionally. Please use good judgment.

This does not include email lists of legitimate, work-related newsletters. For example, if you subscribe to the NJEA newsletters, this is perfectly fine. Simple text messages of jokes are ok as well – just use good judgment when forwarding these on to others.

The Danger: As for the “joke of the day” site, we have had some issues where a person will visit a website that lists jokes for the day. This type of website or email list will often ask if you want to send this joke onto a friend. Many of these sites start out honest and innocuous. However, many of them also set you up to receive pop-ups or spam email. By using these sites, not only do they know who you are and can do this to you, but now they have a list of your friends that they can do this to as well.

MUSIC / VIDEO download services: Don’t even go there. If you didn’t pay for it, it is not yours. Examples of these sites would be KaZaa or Napster.

This does NOT include free news and educational sites such as CNN Video on demand or Digital Curriculum sources. The district has a video on demand service available from Digital Curriculum and if you would like to use its services, you are more than welcome.

The Danger It is illegal according to copyright laws. A number of high schools have had equipment seized by the FBI because of illegal downloading of songs and movies. The litigation is growing daily. Please do not compromise yourself or the district.

Games: There are several sites online that you can visit and play a quick game for stress relief without downloading anything. Do not download and install any games.

The Danger: Unless you pay for it, it is not yours. It is time consuming for me to clean up your machines. Many times, these games expire after a trial period and by leaving them on your machine, you are loading it with garbage.