Computer Hackers SUMMARY

SOURCE: https://www.webroot.com/ca/en/home/resources/articles/pc-security/computer-security-threats-hackers

How are computer hackers and predators a threat to computer security?

People, not computers, create computer threats. Computer predators victimize others for their own gain. Give a predator access to the Internet — and to your PC — and the threat they pose to your security increases exponentially. Computer hackers are unauthorized users who break into computer systems in order to steal, change or destroy information, often by installing dangerous malware without your knowledge or consent. Their clever tactics and detailed technical knowledge help them access information you really don't want them to have.

How do computer hackers and predators find me?

Anyone who uses a computer connected to the Internet is susceptible to the threats that computer hackers and predators pose. These online villains typically use phishing scams, spam email or instant messages and bogus Web sites to deliver dangerous malware to your computer and compromise your computer security. Computer hackers can also try to access your computer and private information directly if you are not protected with a firewall. They may also monitor your chat room conversations or peruse your personal Web page. Usually disguised with a bogus identity, predators can lure you into revealing sensitive personal and financial information, or much worse.

What can computer hackers and predators do to me?

While your computer is connected to the Internet, the malware a hacker has installed on your PC quietly transmits your personal and financial information without your knowledge or consent. Or, a computer predator may pounce on the private information you unwittingly revealed. In either case, they may:

Hijack your usernames and passwords

Steal your money and open credit card and bank accounts in your name

Ruin your credit

Request new account Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) or additional credit cards

Make purchases

Add themselves or an alias that they control as an authorized user so it's easier to use your credit

Obtain cash advances

Use and abuse your Social Security number

Sell your information to other parties who will use it for illicit or illegal purposes

Predators can pose a serious physical threat. Use extreme caution when agreeing to meet an online "friend" or acquaintance in person.

How will I know?

Check the accuracy of your personal accounts, credit cards and documents. Are there unexplained transactions? Questionable or unauthorized changes? If so, dangerous malware installed by predators or hackers may already be lurking.

What can I do about computer hackers and predators?

When you arm yourself with information and resources, you're wiser about computer security threats and less vulnerable to threat tactics. Hackers and predators pose equally serious and but very different threats.

To protect your computer from hackers and predators:

Continually check the accuracy of personal accounts and deal with any discrepancies right away

Use extreme caution when entering chat rooms or posting personal Web pages

Limit the personal information you post on a personal Web pages

Carefully monitor requests by online "friends" or acquaintances for predatory behavior

Keep personal and financial information out of online conversations

Use extreme caution when agreeing to meet an online "friend" or acquaintance in person

Take these steps to protect your computer from hackers right away:

Use a 2 way firewall

Update your operating system regularly

Increase your browser security settings

Avoid questionable Web sites

Only download software from sites you trust. Carefully evaluate free software and file-sharing applications before downloading them.

Practice safe email protocol:

Don't open messages from unknown senders

Immediately delete messages you suspect to be spam

Make sure that you have the best security software products installed on your PC:

Use antivirus protection

Get antispyware software protection

An unprotected computer is like an open door for computer hackers and predators. To take it a step further, protect your computer from hackers by using a spam filter or gateway to scan inbound email or IM messages. Products like Webroot Spy Sweeper® and Webroot Internet Security Essentials thwart dangerous malware before it can enter your PC, stand guard at every possible entrance of your computer and fend off any spyware or viruses that try to enter, even the most damaging and devious strains. While free anti-spyware and antivirus downloads are available, they just can't keep up with the continuous onslaught of new malware strains. Previously undetected forms of malware can often do the most damage, so it's critical to have up-to-the-minute, guaranteed protection.