

COMPUTER VIRUSES & REPAIR

Trap

Shelley in Delray Beach won a car, at least that's what the pop-up on her laptop computer pop-up showed. However, after clicking the link, her computer became very sluggish. Susan also noticed lots of new pop-ups and it seemed her laptop camera was also activated randomly. She had no virus protection and all her data and pictures were on the hard drive, so, worried, she called the very first computer repair company she found. They wanted \$175 in cash just to open and diagnose the problem.

Tips

Computer viruses cost consumers millions of dollars and many hours of lost time. Viruses such as malware, adware, ransomware, spyware, worms or Trojans steal personal information, send you advertisements, or wreak havoc on your computer. Here are some ways to avoid such problems and select a reputable computer repair company:

- Invest in computer anti-virus software and keep it current. Some internet providers offer free anti-virus software. There are legitimate free anti-virus software companies like Avast (<https://www.avast.com>) or Malwarebytes (<http://www.malwarebytes.org/>). Free anti-virus software usually doesn't provide the full-spectrum of services and protection as the paid versions do.
- Don't open e-mails or attachments from unknown sources – delete them. Don't visit Web sites you don't know. Be very wary of "you've just won" pop-ups.
- Before taking your device out for repair, double check and ensure all computer and power cables have tight connections (This is the cause of 70 percent of all computer problems.) Also, check your warranty and purchase receipt to see if such repairs are covered.
- Avoid paying cash for computer repairs. You have more recourse and options when paying by a credit card. Request a guarantee – and get it in writing.
- Ask friends about their experiences with computer repair companies – referrals are a great resource.
- Ask computer repair workers to list their experience. Ask for and check references.

