



Computer Virus? Nope, it's a PUP

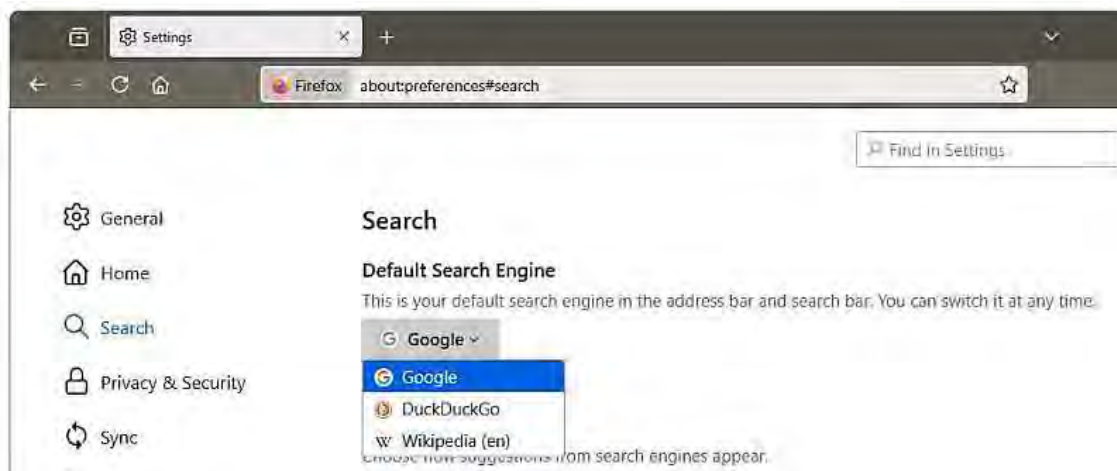
The only reason your computers get infected nowadays is because you went looking for driver update software or installed a browser plugin. Viruses are very rare—those are infected documents that can spread themselves. I haven't seen any viruses in a decade now. It's just a different category of malware. Nearly all malware, the generic term for the entire category of evil software, is well-blocked by the combination of endpoint security software (like Webroot or Malwarebytes) and using non-admin accounts to block most drive-by install attempts.

So malware authors rely on **you** to install their stuff. It's a fake invoice, usually

propped up by False Urgency Syndrome to make it look time-sensitive and important, or a misleading prompt on a web page to offer a browser plugin or driver updater because they say it's dangerous not to do something, like, right now. Or it would make searching better and faster. (It doesn't.) The reason these programs make it past security software is that they've been classed as PUPs. Those are Potentially Unwanted Programs, basically malware from a company that has lawyers that treat malware identification as libel. It's enough to prevent automatic removal. These include a lot of programs that rely on end users to install them. Let's look at the most common offenders.

Plugins and Extensions

Browser plugins change how your browser works, and the search types send your searches somewhere else than where they should have gone, which should usually be Google.com or DuckDuckGo.com. Breaking browser functionality is not an improvement; if you want to use a different search engine, select it in the browser's search options setting, and skip the mostly-malware browser plugins that exist mostly to make money from your searches, or to steal passwords as you surf. Short version: Don't install browser plugins without researching them first to check for complaints.



The correct way to choose a search engine. Firefox shown.

Drivers

First, if your computer hardware and printers are working, they don't need driver updates. Leave them alone. You go looking for drivers, or call me for that, when they're not doing what they should. That's usually for printers, which have drivers that are complex and easily broken by Windows Update. Other than

that, most end users should leave the drivers as configured.

Any notice you get on screen that says you need driver updates is probably a web page popup. An advertisement. Or a scam. The same applies to updaters inside security suites—they're dangerous, and a sales tool to sell software, always.

Drivers, and legit driver software updaters, come from the hardware manufacturer of the main board in your computer. If the computer came from Dell, Lenovo, or HP, the driver updates come from those same companies. And if it's for a printer, the driver comes from the manufacturer of the printer. No exceptions. Ever.

Custom computers work the same way. It's just that the name of the board manufacturer may not be on the outside of the computer. It might show up during startup and will probably be [Asus](#), [Gigabyte](#), or [MSI](#). Those companies have update pages specifically for each board model. If you got it from me, the motherboard is listed on the original invoice. If not, there are programs to identify the board manufacturer and model number: Speccy from CCleaner does that, at

<https://www.ccleaner.com/speccy>

How to Search for Drivers Safely

For either branded or custom computers, you can go to the website of the manufacturer and get updates. In many cases there are programs on those websites that will scan the computer for updates; these are available, free, from Dell, Lenovo, and HP, and are usually pre-installed on new computers.

Here's a quick refresher on how to search just ONE web site. For example, to search Brother's web site for a printer driver for an MFC-L2700DW, which is a popular multi-function printer/scanner, go to Google.com and use this search:

site:brother.com driver mfc-l2700dw

That 'site:___' search shows only search results on the web address you enter. This also works on DuckDuckGo.com.

I have yet to see a third-party driver updater program that did a good job. The

vast majority of those updater programs are evil. It's a dirty software category. Stay far away from driver updater programs that are not from the hardware manufacturer, and browser plugins in general.

News Roundup



Dell Trashes their Trademarks

Dell is making their product names easier to understand for everyone who has not already bought their computers. I usually have an issue with trademark madness, as I do in this case, because Dell has some major brand loyalty for the names that are going away, and you can't trademark 'Pro' or 'Plus.' Here's the short version:

- Dell Inspiron becomes just Dell.
- Dell XPS will be Dell Premium.
- Dell Inspiron Plus becomes Dell Plus.
- Dell Latitude becomes Dell Pro
- Dell Precision becomes Dell Pro Max.

More online:

<https://www.pcmag.com/news/ces-2025-dell-rebrands-its-whole-pc-lineup-now->

[its-all-just-dell](#)

Microsoft 365 Price Hike Bundles Copilot AI

For subscription Microsoft Office users, Copilot artificial intelligence is now added to Office whether you've asked for it or not, and the price will increase by \$3/month. So that's a lot less than the \$20/month that Microsoft wanted for Copilot as an add-on service. That's the answer to the old joke about losing money on a product and wanting to increase sales: They'll make it up in volume.

Reminder: Copilot that's built into Office can place AI results directly in Word, Outlook, and other Office software, and the claim is that information used there is not used for AI training. The free Copilot that's in the Edge browser IS used for AI training, so it is mostly good for advanced web searches, like 'find a product that has ALL of these specific features....'

More online:

<https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2025/01/home-microsoft-365-plans-use-copilot-ai-features-as-pretext-for-a-price-hike/>



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Mailing address:

Science Translations

PO Box 1735

Westminster, MD 21158-5735