

What are Popup ads?

With the invention of smartphones and tablets, the mobile revolution has given game players access to several hundred thousand gaming apps. 'Pop-up ads' are simply advertisements that appear in games and other apps and are a way for app developers to make money. Most games are free to play if you watch ads but require a paid subscription if you want the ads removed.

Why do we see so many?

Advertisers pay developers to target users with ads, and the more ads that are displayed, the more money the developer makes. Since you are playing games most of the ads will be for other games, and clicking on one would probably send you to the Google Play store or Apple app store to install new games, so they can make you play their games and watch more ads and cycle continues like that. You may notice over time that the ads get more frequent and annoying in the free version to encourage players to subscribe to the paid version.

What are the risks?

Popup ads can be intrusive and sometimes disruptive, but in most cases are not intended to harm you or your device. These ads do not have the capability to directly hack or release viruses onto your device. The risk with pop-up ads comes from the potential to deceive users into clicking on malicious links or downloading harmful software. If you click on a malicious advertisement, you may download malware disguised as software, or you may be lured into handing over personal information--including your credentials (username and password) for an online service

How to protect against malvertising:

- **Think before you click**, just like when it comes to suspicious emails, links, or alerts. Resist clicking on ads, even if they appear to be from reputable companies. Simply put, if you never click on advertisements, you will never click on a malvertisement either.

- If you are interested in what the ad is selling, **do a separate search** for the company or product and find it on their official site. The same deal should be offered on their site if it's legitimate.
- **Always be skeptical** about any suspiciously alarming notices, or scareware, as well as any too-good-to-be-true pop-up offers you receive. Like the ads, their intent may be malicious as well.
- **Keep software up to date** as a visit to a web site that contains a method of malvertising, called drive-by, could take advantage of a security flaw if one is running an older browser (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Microsoft Edge, etc.).ⁱ

As a significant amount of income can come from the use of ads, the use of malvertising will continue to be with us. [If you would like an in-depth explanation on malvertising we invite you to view a thorough presentation.](#) Let's all do our part and continue to be cautious as we navigate online.
