

# Unwanted Program (PUP/PUA) - what it is, telltale signs, and how to remove or avoid it

Gridinsoft Help Center

## What it is

An unwanted program is software you did not really ask for that sneaks in with something else or uses tricks to get installed. It is not always outright malware, but it can change your browser, show ads, collect data, add toolbars or updaters, and make your PC slower or less private. You often see these bundled with free downloads or fake installers. Basics and examples: <https://gridinsoft.com/unwanted-program>

## Why it matters

PUPs clutter your device, track what you do, and can open the door to worse stuff later. They also make it harder to spot real threats because of all the noise.

## How it works

- Bundle: rides along with a free app under pre-checked offers.
- Sneak: uses misleading buttons like Express/Recommended to install extras.
- Hijack: changes search, homepage, or adds browser extensions.
- Stay: sets up auto-start tasks and background updaters.

## Red flags

- New toolbars or extensions appeared without you installing them.
- Search engine or homepage changed on its own.
- Extra pop-ups, ads, or a slower PC after a recent install.
- Installers that push many add-ons with tiny opt-out boxes.

## Do it right

- Get apps from official sites or trusted stores and choose Custom install to uncheck extras.
- Review browser extensions and remove anything you do not recognize.
- Use a reputable security tool to scan and clean.
- Reset browser settings if they were hijacked and uninstall odd updaters.