

## Personal Computer Hygiene Part 2: Removing Worms and Pop-Ups with Ad-Aware

LK 11/29/2004

Assuming you have an up-to-date virus checker on your computer, and you have recently used it to scan the hard drives, you may still experience slow performance in general, or find that you get large numbers of “pop-ups” when accessing web sites using Internet Explorer. What may have happened is that in the course of moving around on the internet, your computer has downloaded a rogue program that, for its own nefarious purposes, is now using some of your computing power. Such programs may simply track where you move on the internet, or replicate themselves to other computers.

Several scanning programs are available to remove many of these rogue programs. The first is called “Ad-Aware SE”, and can be downloaded from [www.lavasoft.com](http://www.lavasoft.com).

Once installed, the procedure is similar to using a virus checker:

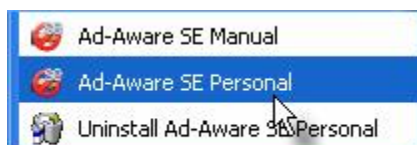
Open the program

Check for updates of the definition file

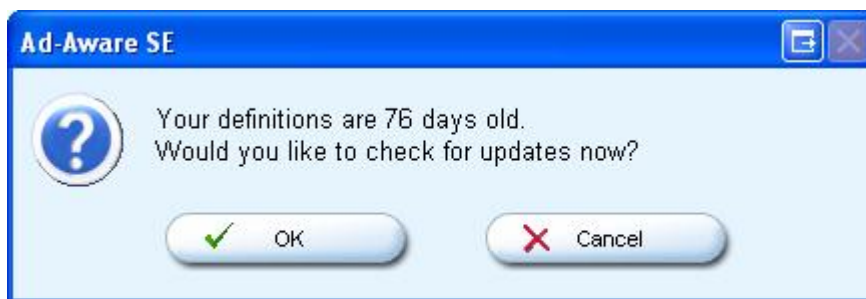
Run the scan.

### **Starting the Program:**

The program will be located under the *Start | Programs | Lavasoft Ad-Aware SE Personal*



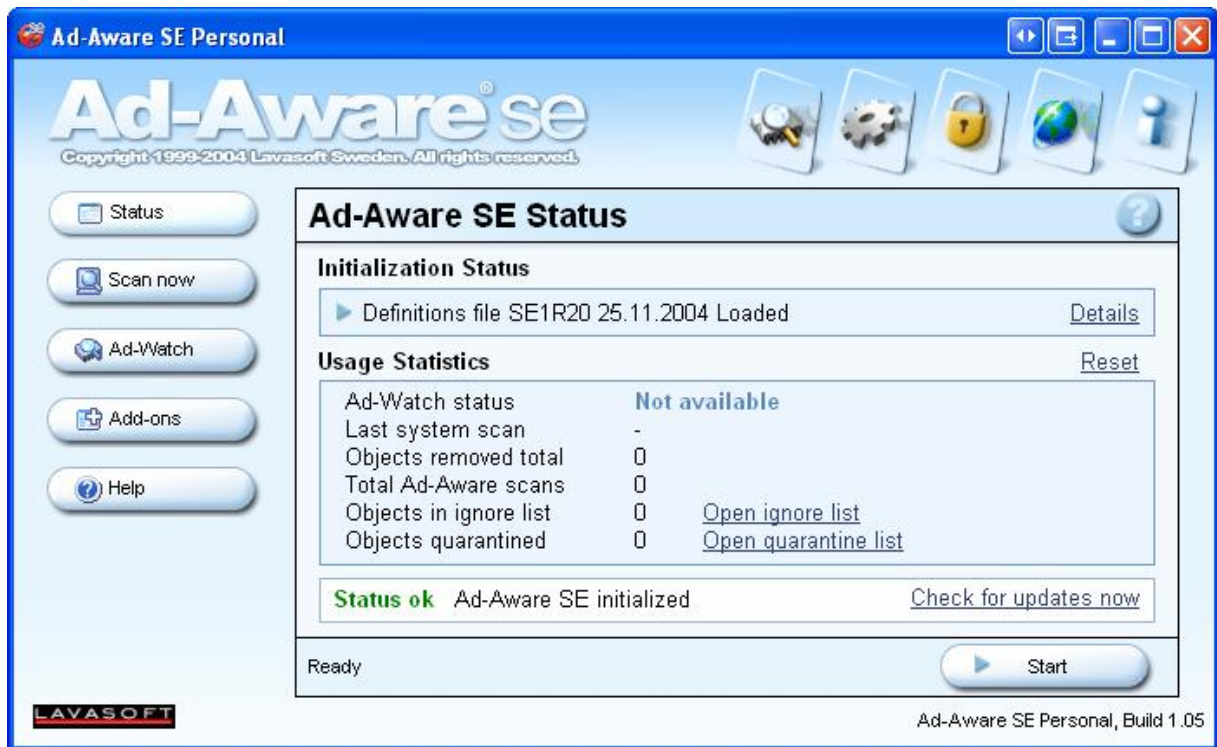
As it opens the program will check to see the last time it was updated, and if it wasn't recent, it will show the following screen:



Under normal circumstances, you should select *OK* and let the program search for updates.

### **Performing a scan**

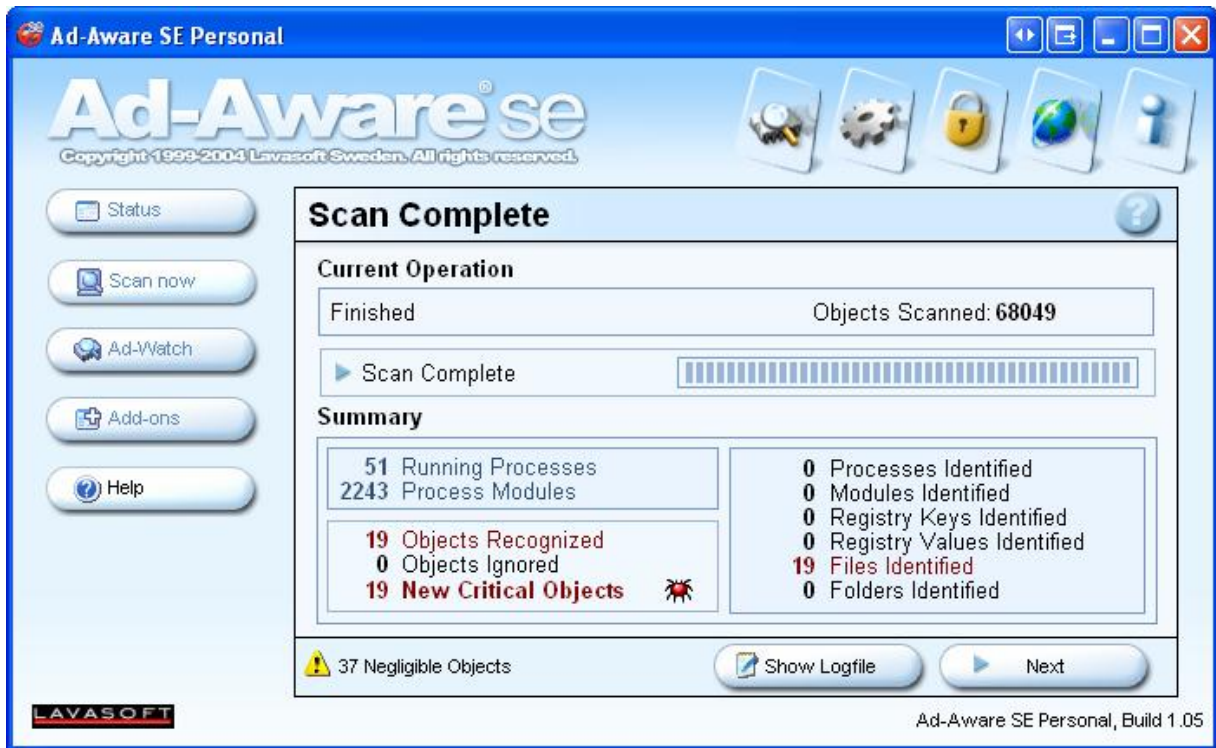
Once the program has searched and installed any updates, you'll come to the main program screen:



Click the *Start* button and the scan will begin. You'll see a screen showing the current results.



Once the scan is complete, you'll see a screen showing the results:



In this case, the program has found 19 “critical objects”. Click on the *Next* button, and find out more:



In my case, it shows there were 19 “Tracking Cookies”... these are files placed on the computer by certain web sites. The cookies are designed specifically to “report back” to the site when and where you are online. It is exactly these kinds of cookies that facilitate unwanted pop-up ads. Note that I checked these for deletion.

The second entry, the “MRU list” consists of “most recently used” listings, either the names of files that I’ve recently opened, or a list of web sites that I’ve recently gone to. Under most circumstances, these are benign, so I’ve left these unchecked for deletion.

By clicking the *Next* button the tracking cookies are deleted.

The scanning process will take a few minutes depending on the number of files that you have stored on your hard disk, the speed of the computer, and other tasks that you may be performing. 5 – 10 minutes is not unusual. You can minimize the window while the scan is taking place and go on to other things.

## **Conclusion**

The Ad-Aware program or a similar program is available at no cost, and can be downloaded and installed in a few minutes. Once this is installed you should consider running it once a week, or any time you experience pop-up ads or slow performance.