

What is a botnet and how does it spread?

 By [Carey van Vlaanderen](#)

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Have you ever seen posts on social networks or emails under your name that you did not send? Is your computer running slowly or do you often find your screen filled with pop-ups. All of these things could be symptoms of infections and might indicate that your computer is part of a botnet.

But what is a botnet? A botnet is a network of computers infected with malware that responds to an attacker to perform any activity they want. These infected computers are also known as 'bots' or 'zombies' and their master is called the botmaster. The infection will enable cyber criminals to control these infected computers remotely.

How does it spread and why?

When surfing the internet it is very often that we download software for useful and legitimate purposes. But whilst some software appears to be safe, once it is installed it can actually have a malicious purpose. This is known as a trojan and is a major cause of the spread of botnets. We can find them in social networks and all over the web.

With this army of zombies, botmasters can use these networks to commit crimes such as financial frauds, malware distribution, identity theft, the mass mailing of spam, storing illegal content and it can even collapse websites from massive attacks. With a single botnet cyber-criminals can commit many crimes in one day and put users sensitive data at risk, meanwhile they often don't even know they're infected.

How do we protect ourselves?

Firstly, it's important to have a security solution with a firewall to filter communications between your computer and the internet. Also, be careful when downloading apps or programs from the web by verifying they come from official, trustworthy sources. Make sure that all software is updated to the latest version, as patches will solve vulnerabilities in earlier versions.

Finally, if you do not want to be part of a botnet and have your computers overrun by zombies install ESET Smart Security with botnet protection and enjoy safer technology.

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