

PopUp Ad Filter

By Govind Rammurthy – MD and CEO – MicroWorld Technologies Inc.

Unwanted PopUp Ads are intrusive Internet advertisements that are displayed when you access web pages. This white paper provides information about different type of PopUp Ads, losses they cause, how they work and suggests key features that a good PopUp Ad Filter software should have.

What is a PopUp Ad

PopUp Ad is an advertisement that appears when you access or exit a web page. These are created and placed on web pages by advertisers or web site owners. Not all PopUps are unwanted. Some sites require you to fill a registration form or you may have clicked a link for information and it is displayed as PopUp.

PopUp Ad provides a very cheap and ‘cost effective’ means to reach a wide audience. It costs the advertiser a pittance and invariably gets the eyeball count.

Types of PopUp Ads

Common types of PopUp Ads are:

Mouse Over: These are displayed when you move the cursor over a link or an object in the web page.

Plain PopUps: These appear when you click on an object.

Context PopUps: These appear when you place the cursor on a screen element and press the context help button e.g. F1. A separate window giving information about the element is displayed.

Tool tips: These appear for a small duration when you hold the cursor over a screen tool element. They provide brief information about the element.

Menu PopUp: These are displayed when you click on a link on the menu bar. They allow you to perform additional tasks.

Under Ads: These PopUps run in the silent or minimized window mode.

On Load and On Unload: These are displayed when you open or close a web page.

Figure 1 shows an example of a PopUp Ad.

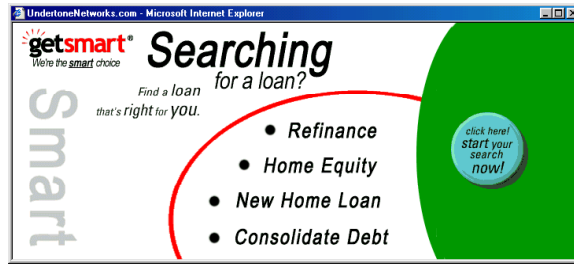


Figure 1 Example of a PopUp Ad

Losses caused by PopUp Ads

While PopUps do not cause data corruption or system crash, they are irritating and cost you money when you chase and stop them.

Some of the losses caused by PopUp Ads are listed below:

- You spend access time in trying to close PopUps. This costs money.
- Bandwidth of your ISP is consumed when pages with PopUps are opened. Web pages you access take longer to open. This costs you money.
- They give information, not related to your interests. They may even be offensive and give links to Porn, violence, etc.
- Some PopUps open a series of PopUps. New ones open up when a PopUp is closed. You may need to shut down your browser to close them all. This leads to unnecessary use of bandwidth and net access time.

How PopUps Work

PopUps are HTML pages that use JAVA/VB scripts to run. They are classified by the way they run.

Event Driven PopUps: These are displayed when you carry out an event like:

OnLoad: When you click on a link to load web page.

OnUnload: When you close a page.

OnMouseOver: When you move the cursor over a link or an object in the web page.

Head and Body: The web page you access has the basic structure of head and body. PopUps are enclosed in these two areas. As the page starts loading, the PopUp in these two areas are run automatically.

For a live demonstration of PopUps, visit <http://www.mwti.net/testpop/test1.htm>

What PopUp Filters do

When you open a web page, the PopUp Filter software reads the code in the web page. Any commands that ask a PopUp to display are searched and overridden. A good PopUp Filter should perform the following tasks:

- Act as a Firewall for PopUps. Works in the background.
- Monitor your system as you surf the web and kills PopUps before they open.
- Speed up your surfing by blocking PopUps.
- Provide configurable warnings alert you when a site attempts to open a PopUps.
- Does not block legitimate/informative PopUp windows.

Recommended Features of a PopUp Ad Filter Software

There are many types of PopUp Filter software that have flooded the market (probably as many as the PopUps). The key features that a good filter should have are:

- Block **100 %** PopUps.
- Allow PopUps of sites in **White List**.
- **Hot key** to allow PopUps to be displayed temporarily.
- **Test PopUp Filter on-line**. This feature allows you connects to a website with a PopUp. If the PopUp Filter you have installed is good, PopUp Ad on the test page is blocked and you can see details in the log.
- Should not hinder or slow your web surfing.
- Consume minimal **CPU** resources.
- Should not block legitimate PopUps. For e.g. In the CNN web page, news snippets are displayed when you click a button. The snippets are PopUp windows.

White List: While majority of PopUp Ads are unwanted, some PopUps like registration forms, on-line enquiry forms, etc. are very much required. Websites with PopUps that you need are included in the White List. Once a website is included in this list, all PopUps in these sites are

allowed to be displayed on your screen. PopUps in sites, not included in the white list, are 100 % blocked.

Hot Key: Hot key feature allows you to assign a key that you keep pressed when you want PopUps to be enabled temporarily in a page. As you surf the net, if you want a PopUp to be displayed, press the hot key to display it temporarily. When you release the key, the PopUp is blocked.

Following table provides a list of features that must be present in a good PopUp Ad Filter.

Recommended Features	Recommended Features
Block 100% unsolicited PopUps	Block Mouse Over PopUps.
Block Pop-Under Ads	Provide Notification when blocking
Block Unknown PopUps	Provide Comprehensive history log
Block Known PopUps	Never slow your Browser
Set Up change should not be required for specific URL or Keywords	Minimal CPU resource utilization
Should not interfere with your navigation, work in the background	Should work with Internet Explorer, Netscape, Opera, Mozilla, NeoPlanet and other browsers.
Should not interfere with opening new windows	Never create screen flash
Performance should not depend on accessed web site design	White List for URL and IP exceptions
Should have ability to recall blocked PopUps	Block re-opened PopUps when you exit a page
Save Bandwidth	Block PopUps without downloading them
Proxy settings should not be adjusted.	Provide Hot key to temporarily enable PopUps.

Figure 2, shows a screen shot of [eScan](#), the top selling Anti-Virus and Content Security software that has PopUp Filter included in it.

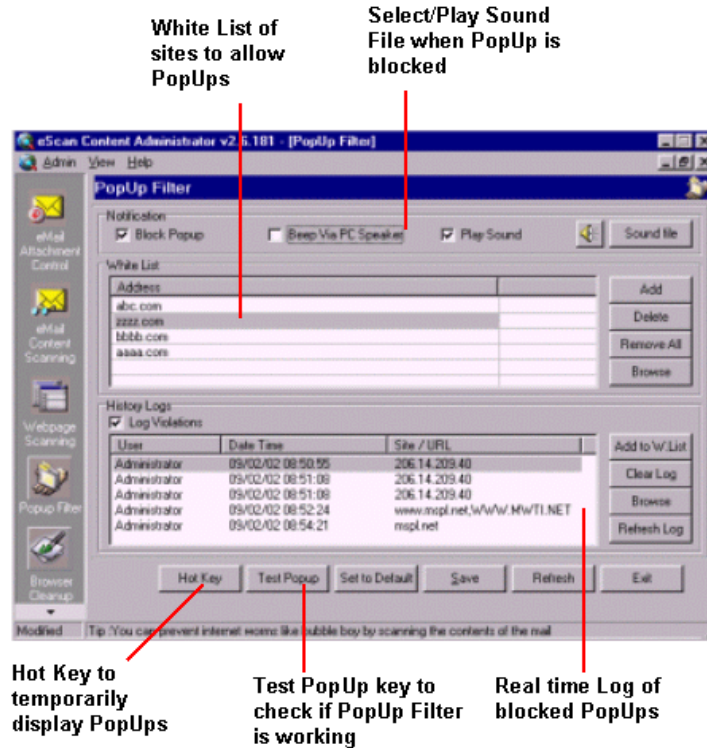


Figure 2 Features of a good PopUp Filter

About the Author

Govind Rammurthy is a hard core 'techie' with keen business acumen. He founded MicroWorld Technologies Inc. in 1995 and has been in the forefront of the fight against Viruses and other threats. He leads the team of programmers and QA who have developed world-class product suites: **eScan** and **MailScan**. These products offer the greatest control in the areas of Anti-Virus and Content-Security.

To find out how MicroWorld can help you, visit <http://www.mwti.net/>