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Software emerges to block 'popup' ads

By [James Turner](#)

IF THE WORD "POPUP" makes you think of baseball, then you haven't been using the Web lately.

No longer content to simply display paid banner ads on Web pages, many advertisers are using technologies that bring up new browser windows above the one you are viewing – or below it, in a variation called a "popunder."

Perhaps the most notorious of this new breed are the ads for the X10 video camera, which appear with such frequency that it's possible to have five or six of them pile up under your browser window before you notice.

The X10 ad resulted in 28 million unique visitors to its maker's site in the first five months of 2001, although a study by Jupiter Media Metrix last July found that the visits dropped off quickly as Web users became saturated with the ads, and the campaign ended up generating a lot of bad will.

That relative success, in terms of generating traffic, has not been lost on other businesses.

According to the same Jupiter report, marketers working on behalf of all kinds of businesses are increasingly experimenting with new ad formats to try to stay afloat in the leaner Internet environment.

As a result, Web users can expect to be bombarded with more of these intrusive windows.

But numerous products have emerged to protect you from popups and pop-unders.

Although a handful of free "shareware" ad blockers are available, none was able to match the performance of the commercial software offerings.

We focused on two of the major commercial players, AdsGone, from Minnesota-based A1Tech,

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and Popup Ad Filter, from Georgia-based Meaya Software.

Both do an efficient job of blocking popups and popunders, and both can be configured to notify you with an audible tone when a popup has been blocked.

Because some popup windows are useful – a popup user-registration screen, for example – both tools also allow you to override the blocking by holding down the control or shift key when clicking on a link, if you notice it has blocked a window you want to see.

AdsGone goes one step further, automatically disabling the blocking on any link that you click twice in a row. AdsGone also allows you to block banner and other embedded advertising from a constantly updated list of known advertising sites.

This would let you save the download time associated with the ads, as well as blocking some of the newer, more intrusive ads that clutter Web pages. AdsGone can also block popups by known advertisers through the use of a database.

AdsGone could be considered the better buy, at \$18.95, to Popup Ad Filters' \$24.95, especially given the added functionalities of AdsGone.

Both products offer free trials. AdsGone offers a 21-day trial; Popup Ad Filter blocks 30 to 40 popups before asking you to buy.

Each can be downloaded from its company's website: (AdsGone, www.a1tech.com; Popup Ad Filter, www.meaya.com).

• James Turner is a computer consultant and freelance technology writer.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- [The pop-up ad campaign from hell](#) Salon
- [Die, pop-up, die! How to kill annoying ads while you surf](#) ZDNet

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