

DRAFT

What You Need to Know about File-Sharing Applications.

Enterprise Networking
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The Ohio State University

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What You Need to Know about Peer-to-Peer File-Sharing Applications

Peer-to-peer (P2P) applications such as Napster, Gnutella, iMesh, Audiogalaxy Satellite, and KaZaA, make it easy for users to exchange files with each other over the Internet. While these programs are a good way of sharing information, they are not entirely harmless and can cause problems for your personal system as well as the university network.

This document provides the information you need to avoid degrading the performance of the university's network, unknowingly sharing your personal data, inadvertently violating federal copyright law, or exposing your computer to malicious code or 'spyware'. Often, it is considered unacceptable use of the network when using peer-to-peer applications.

Network Capacity

Most P2P applications you install will usually be configured so other users can access your hard drive and share your files all of the time. This constant file transfer can degrade your computer's performance and generate heavy traffic loads on the university network, making it difficult for other users of the network to work well. The network is a shared resource and we all must use it responsibly.

Ohio State network bandwidth consumption is monitored. If your usage could possibly impact the overall performance of the network, your computer may be blocked until the situation can be discussed.

Students living in university residence halls are limited in the amount of bandwidth they can use and having these applications running all the time can quickly use up their available bandwidth.

Before you install any program on your computer, especially a P2P application, read that program's documentation and disable limit file-sharing access to only those whom you want to share files with.

Copyright Issues

File-sharing applications make it easy for you to share music, videos, movies, software, text and other files. However, unless you have the explicit permission of the copyright owner to possess or distribute the material, you may be in violation of federal copyright law. It is best to assume that all material is copyrighted.

The University cannot protect you from a copyright complaint. In fact, we may be legally required to assist a complainant in pursuing action against you. The penalties can range from university sanctions to civil and/or criminal prosecution. Individual copyright owners and the entertainment industry are quite active in pursuing legal actions. You are not protected just because you received material at no cost or are distributing material with no charge. Your only protection is to not possess or distribute **any** unlicensed copyrighted material.

Privacy

If you are running a file-sharing application, make sure you know which files and data the program can access and provide to others. You may be inadvertently sharing personal information such as e-mail messages and credit card information, or other important information that may be stored on your computer. A faculty member or graduate student may be unintentionally sharing confidential research data or a university staff member may be inadvertently sharing university business.

Security

Virus writers are often target file-sharing applications. If malicious code infects your computer, it can spread to millions of computers on the Internet. It is essential that you keep your anti-virus program up to date and install programs acquired only from reputable sources. You can download anti-virus software on the [OSU Site Licensed Software](#) site.

Some file-sharing applications also access your computer to provide a computational or storage resource for another organization's personal use. This may not be an acceptable use of state-owned resources such as the Ohio State network or Ohio State-owned computers. Do not permit any such use of your system without the consent of the university. For assistance, please contact ITPolicy@osu.edu.

University Policy and Assistance

In summary, please remember that file-sharing programs are not necessarily harmless and in using them you may inadvertently consume excessive network bandwidth, violate copyright law, inadvertently share confidential information or

make your computer insecure. Bandwidth usage that is not related to academic, research, or University Business and copyright infringement are violations of the university's [*Policy on Responsible Use of University Computing Resources*](#). For more information, read the university's [*Information Technology Policies*](#).

For technical assistance, please call 688-HELP or send e-mail to 8help@osu.edu.

References

[*OSU Site Licensed Software*](#)

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