



## BEWARE OF FREE FILE CONVERTERS

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Who hasn't needed or wanted to convert a file from one format to another at some time? With all the formats out there, it is almost inevitable that someone would send a file in a format you can't open or use. Or maybe you have a file in an older format that you or others are not able to open.

For example, to convert:

- An older word processing format to a pdf
- A pdf to a word processing format
- Combining multiple images into one file.

If a file needs to be converted most people will do what they usually do when needing information – an internet search. Lo and behold, not only do a number of sites come up offering file conversions, but some of them are free!

Guess which one gets clicked? For many people the free one is the obvious choice. Maybe funds are limited, or they think why pay for something that I can get for free.

Whatever the reason, the link is clicked. And the damage is done.

To lull you into a false sense of security, the file will be converted causing people to think everything is fine. But it isn't.

These sites often put malware on your device. That malware may be ransomware that will encrypt everything on your device and others it can spread to and demand a ransom for decrypting it. It may be an info-stealer that will take your information, or it may hijack your browser to direct you to sites they want. It may be adware which will keep popping up ads that will take you to corrupt sites. Or it may load programs on your device that you never intended to get.

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All of these are dangerous. They will look for and steal your information including:

- Personal Identifiable Information (PII) e.g. Social Security Numbers (SSN), Date of Birth, Age, home address, etc.
- Financial information, bank account number, login credentials and crypto wallets.
- Passwords and session tokens that could allow the scammers to bypass password changes and Multi-Factor Authentication, MFA.
- Email addresses to all the sites you access.

How do they get the malware onto your device? A few different ways.

- Say that the conversion requires you to download the tool. It may be the file conversion tool, but it surely contains malware.
- Suggest you install a browser extension to make conversions easier or for any other reason. The extension hijacks your sessions to direct you to the site of their choosing and often delivers adware and other malware.
- Another way is that the converter is in the cloud, so you don't have to download any tool. But the converted file itself is infected with the malware, typically an infostealer. You or anyone who opens the file is infected with the malware.

What Can You Do?

Just knowing about these scams will hopefully stop you from clicking those links or being more cautious of things offered for free.

Be sure to have anti-malware from a recognized company on all your devices and always keep it up to date.

If you have clicked a link at work report it to your CISO. At home use your anti-malware to run a scan. If you suspect the machine is still infected consult a professional about removing it. Don't leave it to friends who aren't professionals. Malware is very insidious and knows how to hide.

Change any passwords that might have been compromised.

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If you suspect:

- Bank credentials - report it to your bank
- Credit card - report it to the issuer
- Investment credentials - report it to the investment firm
- Report it to the police and FBI Internet Crimes Complaint Center, <https://www.ic3.gov>

As much as you want to convert that file, it is better to be safe than sorry. Use a recognized company or look at the Internet Crimes Complaint Center at the link above to see if a site you found is known to be corrupt.

We aim to keep you informed about developments in cybersecurity, the good ones and the bad ones. As they say, forewarned is forearmed.

Stay safe.

Visit our site, [onebrightlycyber.com](http://onebrightlycyber.com) to learn all the ways we help keep you safer.

Welcome to peace of mind.