



How do I protect my computer from adware, spyware, and viruses?

How to insure that your computer stays protected

- 1 - Do not download programs from questionable websites.
- 2 - Scan a file with a virus program before you open it.
- 3 - Insure that your computer's firewall is on.
- 4 - Keep Windows up to date.
- 5 - Monitor your emails and attachments carefully.

It seems like not a day goes by where we don't hear about some new kind of threat aimed at wreaking havoc across computers connected to the internet.

Microsoft being pre-installed on most PC's makes Microsoft products, and particularly Microsoft Windows, an irresistible target for hackers and spyware. In recent years, products like Adobe Reader, Flash, Firefox and more have come under attack as their popularity has increased. Even the Macintosh is no longer invulnerable.

There are some things you can, and should, do to stay safe.

Use a Firewall

A firewall is a piece of software or hardware that sits between your computer and the network and only allows certain types of data to cross. For example, a firewall may allow checking email and browsing the web, but disallow things like Windows file sharing.

"It all might seem overwhelming, but it's not nearly as overwhelming as an actual security problem if and when it happens to you."

If you're using a dial-up internet connection, a firewall may not be as important, although it doesn't hurt to have one. A software firewall may be your only option, though.

Below are the three best free Firewalls.

Comodo has long been considered **one of the best** free firewall tools available. Comodo is now a full Internet security company providing many for-pay solutions, but they still provide a comprehensive free Internet security suite (with firewall) which has been given a five-star rating from CNET. Comodo technically includes an antivirus and a firewall, and the antivirus is quite good. Of course, it is up to you if you want to actually keep the antivirus protection active or you choose to just use the firewall. Comodo has many advanced features which can help protect your computer if malware does become active on the system. This includes the ability to lock down specific files and registry keys. Comodo also has received praise for being relatively light on system resources, which is commendable for any free product. This makes it the best free firewall for computers which are older and sometimes struggle running firewall programs. Be aware that Comodo does install the Ask.com toolbar by default, but you can opt out of this.

PC Tools Firewall Free Edition has been praised for its great interface which makes it relatively easy to use compared to other free firewalls. Many users have found that the PC Tools Firewall is easier to install than other options and that it has a low rate of false positives, an annoying trait which plagues some free firewalls. PC Tools Firewall also received a four star rating from CNET, placing it just behind Comodo.

PC Tools Firewall will ask to install Spyware Doctor, a free anti-malware program. Spyware Doctor is not a third party program but rather another program made by PC Tools. It is competent, but the free version isn't a replacement for antivirus software. Overall, PC Tools is a great choice for users who have been confused by firewall interfaces in the past.

ZoneAlarm was one of the first free firewalls available for Windows computers. It has a long history of providing great protection against numerous types of threats. While the basic functions of ZoneAlarm remain the same as ever, ZoneAlarm has been refined significantly over the years. The free version of ZoneAlarm has many advanced features, such as automatic Wi-Fi security, anti-phishing protection, and behavioral threat detection. Many of these extra features are not really the responsibility of a firewall, but it is always nice to have extra protection. The core firewall features of ZoneAlarm Free remain strong, prompting a five-star review from CNET. The outbound protection is cited as being particularly strong. Outbound protection helps ensure that malware attempting to relay data from your computer to another computer will not be allowed to function. ZoneAlarm can appear a be daunting, but it provides the best overall firewall protection and is a good choice for advanced users.



Scan for Viruses

Sometimes, typically via email or other means, viruses are able to cross the firewall and end up on your computer anyway.

A virus scanner will locate and remove them from your hard disk. A *real-time* virus scanner will notice them as they arrive, even before they hit the disk, but at the cost of slowing down your machine a little.

Important: Because new viruses are arriving every day, it's important to keep your virus definitions up-to-date. Be sure to enable the scanning software's automatic-update feature and have it do so *every day*.

Best and Trusted Free Anti Virus programs on the market are:

- Avira AntiVir Personal

<http://www.avira.com/en/avira-free-antivirus>

- Panda Cloud AntiVirus

<http://www.cloudantivirus.com/en/>

- PC Tools AntiVirus Free

<http://www.pctools.com/free-antivirus/>

- AVG Anti-Virus Free

<http://free.avg.com/us-en/free-antivirus-download>

- avast! Free Antivirus

<http://www.avast.com/en-gb/free-antivirus-download>

- Microsoft Security Essentials

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/products/security-essentials>

Note: If any of these programs ever ask you if you would like to turn on active protection, click "No."

Best and Trusted Bought Anti Virus programs on the market are:

[Kaspersky Internet Security 2012](#)

Kaspersky Internet Security 2012 had the highest scores in detection and removal of existing malware (a 5.5 out of possible 6.0) and for overall usability and performance (also 5.5 out of

possible 6.0). This well-roundedness not only earns Kaspersky a spot on the best antivirus to protect against Web and email threats, but also earns it a spot in the overall best antivirus for Windows and a top pick for the best antivirus for netbooks and older PCs.

[Trend Micro Internet Security Suite](#)

Smart Protection Network is the key component of Trend Micro Internet Security [PC-Cillion], included in both the Pro and vanilla version. The Smart Protection Network sets up a continuous communication channel between your PC and Trend Micro's servers, reporting file activities and other system activities on an ongoing basis. Trend Micro's servers analyse the data, create signatures as necessary, and push back the updates to users.

[Microsoft Security Essentials](#)

Microsoft Security Essentials 2 uses both definition-file and real-time defences against viruses and spyware, and also offers rootkit protection. Along with the quick scan and the full scan, there's a Custom scan option that lets users select specific folders or drives to scan. It doesn't allow for customising the type of scan used. For example, you're not going to be able to choose to scan only for rootkits or heuristics, as you can with other security programs. However, you can set USB keys and other external devices to automatically get scanned. The program installs a context-menu option for on-the-fly scanning in Windows Explorer, too.

Scan for Spyware

Spyware is similar to viruses in that they arrive unexpected and unannounced and proceed to do something undesired. Spyware can be relatively benign from a pure safety perspective, as it might "only" spy on you. But that's enough. It can violate your privacy by tracking the web sites that you visit, add "features" to your system that you didn't ask for, or record your keystrokes and steal your account login information for any online services that you might use.

Some of the worst offenders are spyware that hijack normal functions for themselves. For example, some like to redirect your web searches to other sites to try and sell you something. Of course, some spyware is so poorly written that it might as well *be* a virus, given how unstable it can make your system. The good news is that, like virus scanners, there are spyware scanners that will locate and remove the offending software.

These below are the best of the free Spyware programs, You can download them all and use them regularly, the more you use them the better.

Malwarebytes is not really an anti-virus tool, per se (in fact in their forums you'll see the support staff regularly recommending anti-virus tools to install alongside Malwarebytes), and I can't really call it an anti-spyware tool either. But it currently has one of the best track records of removing troublesome malware quickly and effectively. Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware comes in two versions: free and pay. The free version is a fully functional stand-alone manual scanner. The paid version adds realtime scanning, and scheduled scanning and scheduled updates.

SuperAntiSpyware will remove all the spyware, not just the easy ones. Quick, complete and custom scanning of hard drives, removable drives, memory, registry, or individual folders. Includes trusting items, and excluding folders for complete customization of scanning. Detect and remove spyware, adware, malware, Trojans, dialers, worms, key loggers, hijackers, parasites, root kits and many other types of threats. Light on system resources and won't slow down your computer. Repair broken internet connections, desktops, registry editing. Real-time blocking of threats. Prevent potentially harmful software from installing or re-installing.

Spybot - Search & Destroy can detect and remove a multitude of adware files and modules from your computer. Spybot also can clean program and Web-usage tracks from your system, which is especially useful if you share your computer. Modules chosen for removal can be sent directly to the included file shredder, ensuring complete elimination from your system. **Ad-Aware 9.5** continues the development progress that publisher Lavasoft began in version 8. No longer content with offering only malware protection, Ad-Aware now includes antivirus protections licensed from Sunbelt, the makers of Vipre, as well as interesting in-house improvements.

Stay Up-To-Date

90% of virus infections *don't have to happen*. Software vulnerabilities that the viruses exploit usually already have patches available by the time the virus reaches a computer.

The problem? The user simply failed to install the latest patches and updates that would have prevented the infection in the first place.

The solution is simple: enable automatic updates in both Windows and applications, and visit Windows Update periodically.

Educate Yourself

To be blunt, all of the protection in the world won't save you from yourself.

1. Don't open attachments that you aren't *positive* are OK. Don't fall for phishing scams. *Be sceptical*.
2. Don't click on links in email that you aren't *positive* are safe.
3. Don't install "free" software without checking it out first - many "free" packages are so because they come loaded with spyware, adware, and worse.
4. When visiting a web site, did you get a pop-up asking if it's OK to install some software that you're *not sure of* because you've never heard of it? *Don't* say "OK".
5. *Not sure* about some security warning that you've been given? *Don't* ignore it.

6. Choose strong passwords and don't share them with others.
7. Online Banking sites WILL have HTTPS in their address and there Will be a locked padlock at the bottom of your browser, If NOT then close it quick.

Secure Your Mobile Connection

If you're traveling and using internet hot spots, free WiFi, or internet cafes, you *must* take extra precautions.

Make sure that your web email access is via secure (https) connections or that your regular mail is over an encrypted connection as well. Don't let people "shoulder surf" and steal your password by watching you type it in a public place. Make sure that your home WiFi has WPA security enabled, if anyone can walk within range.

What Else?

I *strongly* recommend you **backup**, fact, I can't stress this enough. 99% of hear about could be *completely* by having up to date backups. **Easeus Free** is the backup software I use and



regularly. In the disasters I avoided simply **Todo Backup** recommend.

Two things set **Todo Backup** apart from many other backup utilities (three things, if you count that it's free): its easy-to-use interface and its wizard-based operation. Colourful, large, clearly labelled buttons and icons make it easy for even new computer owners to use, a big plus because they need protection the most yet are usually inexperienced at securing it. The program walks users through its operations and explains each step with detailed instructions, augmented by a good Help file for further assistance.

Todo Backup is freeware and is certified for Windows 7. It downloads as a compressed file but extracts, installs, and opens without fuss.

http://download.cnet.com/Easeus-Todo-Backup-Free/3000-2242_4-10964460.html?tag=dropDownForm;productListing

Keep your computer **up to date**. That means turning on Windows Update or making sure to visit the Windows Update web site religiously. The vast majority of computer infections we hear about are due to the operating system simply not being kept up to date with the latest available patches.

