

Secure your PC

Keeping your PC clear of viruses needn't cost you a penny with our Best Buy security software

Securing your computer against online viruses and other nasties can be a costly business. Security suites – bundles of programs including all the key security functions – can cost between £30 and £50. But it's also possible to get hold of separate security tools that together will provide a decent level of security – and plenty of them are available free of charge.

However, if you install separate programs, you'll have to download them individually from the internet – not recommended if you have a slower dial-up internet connection – and you won't get the integrated, one-stop approach you'll experience with a bundled suite.

Building your defences

The first part of the security jigsaw is a firewall. This acts as a barrier between your computer and the internet, checking the credentials of what comes in and goes out via your internet connection and blocking anything suspicious. Anti-

virus and anti-spyware software are vital for protection against malicious programs that can infect your computer, while spam filters siphon out junk emails before they reach your inbox. Commercial security suites often include all these in one integrated program.

Bundles vs separates

There are free versions of each type of program available, and we have Best Buys in each category. **Download AVG's free anti-virus software instead of buying Norton Internet Security 2009, and you'll save £40. Make sure your Windows firewall is turned on for complete protection.**

If you're not a confident computer user, you may prefer to buy a suite of security programs, as most come with support from the manufacturer. Free programs don't offer this – you'll have to find the solution yourself on the manufacturer's website or internet forums.

Free security software is a great solution for confident PC users



79% AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition

FREE SOFTWARE

This powerful, easy-to-use security software has simple menus and screens and, once it's installed, you don't need to set up anything yourself, as everything works automatically.

The program comes with excellent built-in help and, if you're an advanced user, there's plenty you can do if you dig down into the menus.

However, as with other free programs, you'll have to find the answers to your queries yourself. **WORTH KNOWING** The program incorporates anti-spyware, too.

Web address free.avg.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** 256MB **Ram** **Minimum hard disk** 30MB available space



72% Microsoft Windows Defender

FREE SOFTWARE

This anti-spyware program from Microsoft is built in to Windows Vista or available to download from Microsoft's website if you have Windows XP. This free software clears spyware quickly and effectively, and has good electronic help files if you need assistance.

It's simple to set up for everyday use, and the message alerts that pop up are adequate.

WORTH KNOWING You can set it to run in real time so it stops spyware from getting onto your computer.

Web address www.microsoft.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** 64MB **Ram** **Minimum hard disk** 20MB hard disk space

OUR SECURITY SOFTWARE SURVEY

What other Which? members really think about their security software

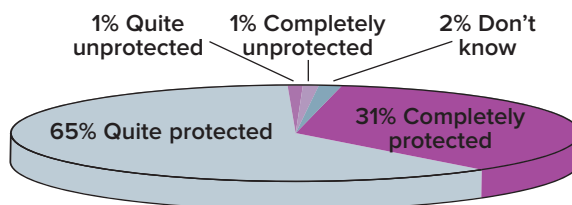
Our recent member survey found that most of you feel protected by your software, and only a tiny proportion are dissatisfied with what you have installed.

The most common paid-for software is Norton – a third of you have this installed, while a quarter use AVG's free anti-virus software.

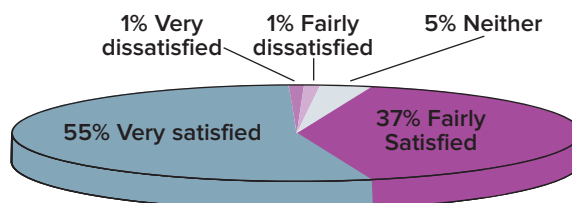
Most of you have had an untroubled experience with your software. Only 9% had problems the last time you installed or upgraded it, while just over one in 10 have had day-to-day problems since installation.

We received 4,564 responses from members of our online panel contacted between 22 and 29 September 2008.

How protected you feel by your software



How satisfied you are with your software



Numbers may not total 100% due to rounding



66% BullGuard Free Spam Filter

FREE SOFTWARE

With clear menus and a usable interface, this program is simple to install and, once it's on your machine, it's easy to enter the settings you need.

There are plenty of useful electronic help files with the software, and there's good support online, too.

It picked up about half of the spam messages in our test – this should improve over time as the program learns from your instructions.

WORTH KNOWING The paid-for suite, BullGuard's Internet Security 8.5, is a Best Buy security suite.

Web address www.bullguard.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** Not specified **Minimum hard disk** 200MB available space



65% Checkpoint ZoneAlarm Basic Firewall

FREE SOFTWARE

Unlike the program built into Windows XP, ZoneAlarm checks both outbound and inbound data. However, if you use Windows Vista, you may find its built-in firewall is enough for your needs.

The number of pop-up alerts can be distracting, and it's not always obvious how serious these warnings are. However, we found it effective.

WORTH KNOWING It checks outgoing as well as incoming data.

Web address www.zonealarm.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** 128MB Ram **Minimum hard disk** 50MB available space

BEST BUY PAID-FOR SECURITY SOFTWARE

If it's extra features you're after, a paid-for suite could be the one for you

The main advantage of paid-for security suites is that all the programs you need to keep your computer safe come in one package, which should lead to a much simpler installation process.

Some of the latest offerings come with even more features bundled in. Paid-for suites may

include parental-control software to help you manage your children's use of the internet, anti-phishing tools to help prevent you from visiting a fraudulent website, and backup software for making copies of important files.

However, you may already have these extra programs,

and similar programs are available separately free of charge.

Bear in mind that as well as the initial cost of a paid-for suite, you'll have to pay an annual subscription after the first year in order to maintain your crucial supply of regular security updates.



87% Symantec Norton Internet Security 2009 £40

PAID-FOR SOFTWARE

This comprehensive security suite boasts frequent updates to ensure that you always have the latest virus information installed.

The look and feel of the program is simple. Almost everything is set up by default, so you'll only have

to fiddle with the settings if you want to make serious changes to the software, which most people probably won't need to do.

The built-in help features are excellent, while user alerts are clear and well designed.

WORTH KNOWING You'll have to download the spam filter and parental-control software from Symantec's website.

Web address www.symantec.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** 512MB Ram **Minimum hard disk** 200MB available space



86% BullGuard Internet Security 8.5 £45

PAID-FOR SOFTWARE

This software's good basic programs are enhanced by the online support facility. Setting it up for everyday use is easy, and the menus and screens are simple to use.

General user alerts are clear, with strong colours to identify problems,

while the electronic documentation that comes as part of the program is very good and well explained.

The suite has a built-in spam filter, which caught over half of our test spam. We would expect results to improve as you teach the program which emails are spam.

WE LIKE The backup option offers 5GB of online storage. It's easy to use, too.

Web address www.bullguard.com **Operating system** At least Windows XP **Minimum memory** Not specified **Min hard disk** 200MB available space

Contacts

Avast! www.avast.com
AVG free.avg.com
Avira free-av.com
BullGuard www.bullguard.com
ClamXAV www.clamxav.com
Checkpoint Software Technologies www.zonealarm.com
Lavasoft www.lavasoft.com
Microsoft www.microsoft.com
Safer Networking www.safer-networking.org
Spamihilator www.spamihilator.com
Ospam www.Ospam.com (please note this address starts with the number zero)

Which? online Install AVG 8.0

Need help installing your security software? Go online for our easy-to-follow guide

Get step-by-step advice on installing the Best Buy free anti-virus software AVG 8.0 with our online guide at www.which.co.uk/avg, plus tips to keep you safe online.



Security tips

Follow our expert advice to stay safe online

■ **Download with caution** Some programs claiming to be security software are actually malicious programs in disguise. Avoid this by downloading directly from the manufacturer's website.

■ **Avoid spam** Never reply to spam emails asking to 'unsubscribe'. Often this just tells the spammers that your email address is in use and worth selling on.

■ **Keep software up-to-date** New viruses appear all the time, so ensure that your software is set up so that it automatically retrieves the latest updates.

■ **Protect your privacy** Don't store passwords or login details on your

computer, and avoid using a single password for everything. A good password will be a combination of letters and numbers.

■ **Avoid phishing** Phishing emails appear to come from a legitimate company, such as a bank. They will ask you to click on a link and update personal data such as login details or account numbers. Never respond to these emails. Instead, contact your bank, or log into your online bank account in the normal way.

■ **Mac users** Most of the software we've tested doesn't work on Macs, but there is a very good firewall built into the OS X operating system, so Mac users should stick with this.

VIRUS FACTFILE

A snapshot look at the evolution of the virus

There are approximately 11 million pieces of malicious software, or malware, in existence. In the last 25 years, computer viruses have evolved from laboratory-bound research projects

into hi-tech tools that are regularly exploited by organised criminals.

In 1999, the Melissa worm targeted Microsoft Word and Outlook-based

systems, which caused more than \$80m worth of damage to businesses around the world.

Since early this decade, criminals have deployed mass viruses using the burgeoning email network.

In 2003, the SoBigF worm spread rapidly via email and took over a host of computers to create its own rogue network, which it used to send out vast amounts of junk email.



| FREE SECURITY SOFTWARE | SPECIFICATION | WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE | | | SCORE % |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| | MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS | EASE OF USE | PERFORMANCE | VERSATILITY | |
| ANTI-VIRUS | | | | | |
| AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition | Windows XP, 30MB hard disk space | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★ | 79 |
| CLAMXAV ClamXAV | Mac OS X | ★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★ | 66 |
| AVIRA AntiVir Personal | Windows XP 30MB hard disk space | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 62 |
| AVAST! Antivirus Home Edition | Windows 95 | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 59 |
| FIREWALL | | | | | |
| CHECKPOINT ZoneAlarm Basic Firewall | Windows XP 50MB hard disk space | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 65 |
| MICROSOFT Windows Vista | n/a | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 58 |
| MICROSOFT Windows XP SP2 | n/a | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 54 |
| ANTI-SPYWARE | | | | | |
| MICROSOFT Windows Defender | Windows XP, 20MB hard disk | ★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★ | 72 |
| LAVASOFT Ad-Aware 2008 Free | Windows XP, 100MB hard disk space | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 53 |
| SAFER NETWORKING Spybot Search & Destroy | Windows 95 | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★ | 52 |
| SPAM FILTER | | | | | |
| BULLGUARD Free Spamfilter | Windows XP, 200MB hard disk space | ★★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★ | 66 |
| OSPAM Ospam.com | Windows or Macintosh | ★★ | ★★★★★ | ★ | 54 |
| SPAMHILATOR Spamihilator | Windows, 20MB hard disk space | ★★ | ★★★★ | ★ | 45 |

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Minimum requirements Your computer must at least match

these specifications for the program to work properly.

Test performance

Ease of use How easy it is to locate the program on the

website, ease of installing, updating and using the program, and clarity of alerts. **Performance** Ability to identify and effectively deal with threats. **Versatility** Range of features available.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:

Ease of use **45%**
Performance **45%**
Versatility **10%**