

Computer Protection (Windows)

It is a sad reality that any computer connected to the internet needs to be protected against **Malware**. Malware is a general term (*derived from malicious software*) used to describe all of the viruses, worms, spyware, and pretty much anything that is specifically designed to cause harm to your computer or steal your information.

Antivirus software attempts to prevent viruses infecting your computer in the first place but you should also scan your computer regularly with some malware removal software to catch anything that has managed to get through.

Anti-Virus Software

Most new Windows computers will probably come with a 'free trial' of a proprietary anti-virus product such as Norton, McAfee or Kaspersky. These are all excellent products but at the end of the 'free trial' you will have to start to pay - or you will not be protected.

You could, of course, opt to pay and may prefer to do so, but there are some very good **really** free alternatives available and the HelpSheets which follow show how to install them.

If your computer is running Windows 8, you can use the built-in **Windows Defender** to protect against viruses, spyware, or other malware. If your computer is running Windows 7, Windows Defender only removes spyware. To get rid of viruses and other malware, including spyware, on Windows 7 you can download **Microsoft Security Essentials** for free.

Defender runs quietly in the background with minimum disruption and does not keep nagging you to buy a full version - but it is beginning to slide down the 'league tables' in terms of effectiveness.

Fortunately, there are some free options such as Avira, Avast! and AVG. The HelpSheets which follow show how to install AVG if you have concerns about Defender. It is chosen because **AVG Antivirus Free** has above-average malware detection and in tests only minimally slowed down PCs. As with most 'free' or 'lite' versions of commercial software however, it will keep prompting you to buy the full version - so beware of tick-boxes!

Malware Removal Tools

Regardless of whether you pay for full-version commercial anti-virus software or run Windows Defender, it is strongly recommended you also install the free version of **MalwareBytes** as a second line of defence.

You could also install the free version of **SpyBot Search and Destroy** on the basis that what one defence misses another might catch.

Unlike anti-virus software, it is quite OK to run different varieties of malware removal software at the same time. HelpSheets follow on how to install both these applications.

Pop-ups

Most internet browsers have an option to block pop-ups but unwanted advertisements can still annoyingly appear. Such Adware, is not really Malware, because it intends no harm, but these Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUPs) can nonetheless pose a real nuisance.

A **really** free solution exists in the form of **Adbloc Plus**. This is available for most browsers and there really is no good reason for not installing it - unless, of course, you like seeing annoying and intrusive advertisements!

HelpSheets follow to show how Adbloc Plus can be installed.