



PERSONAL TECH

Picking a Windows 10 Security Package

Tech Tip

By J. D. BIERSDORFER JAN. 12, 2016

Q. *I'm just starting to use a Windows computer again after many years on a Mac. I want to protect myself but the number of options is overwhelming, including antivirus, anti-spyware, anti-spam, anti-malware, personal firewalls, anti-phishing, anti-Trojan and so on. Do I need all this and should I be paying for all this protection or will some of the free programs suffice?*

A. All-in-one security suites (which typically sell for \$30 and more) promise all-around protection and have their advantages. Depending on how you use the Internet, though, these packages may be overkill. The money you pay in software fees and annual subscriptions does buy relative simplicity once you install the program and let it guard your system on multiple fronts from viruses, spyware, Trojan horse programs (and other malware), remote attacks, dangerous spam and other threats.

However, Windows 10 and other programs you may already be using include many of these security tools — and they are free. Windows Defender, the built-in malicious software scanner that has replaced Microsoft Security Essentials, can detect most basic threats, even though the program did not score particularly high in recent tests (conducted by the independent AV-Test site) that pitted Windows Defender against third-party programs.

Still, Windows Defender is free, comes with Windows 10 (as does Windows Firewall) and is fairly simple to use. When combined with free programs like

Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (which detects Trojan horse programs, spyware and more) and Malwarebytes Anti-Exploit (which shields many popular browsers from web-based attacks), the built-in Windows security programs may be enough. Many mail programs include a junk filter to help trap spam, and services like Microsoft's Outlook.com and Google's Gmail automatically screen for spam and phishing schemes.

Casual surfing to popular sites and established e-commerce outlets should bring you in less contact with malicious software, and surfing while logged into a standard user account (and not the administrator account) is generally much safer. However, if anyone who uses the computer tends to wander deeper into the wilds of the web to file-sharing sites and other invasive malware targets, you may want to shore up your PC's defenses with security software that scores higher in protection and performance tests than Windows Defender. In addition to AV-Test, sites like PCMag.com and TopTenReviews.com also critique and compare multiple programs.

Personal Tech invites questions about computer-based technology to techtip@nytimes.com. This column will answer questions of general interest, but letters cannot be answered individually.

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