

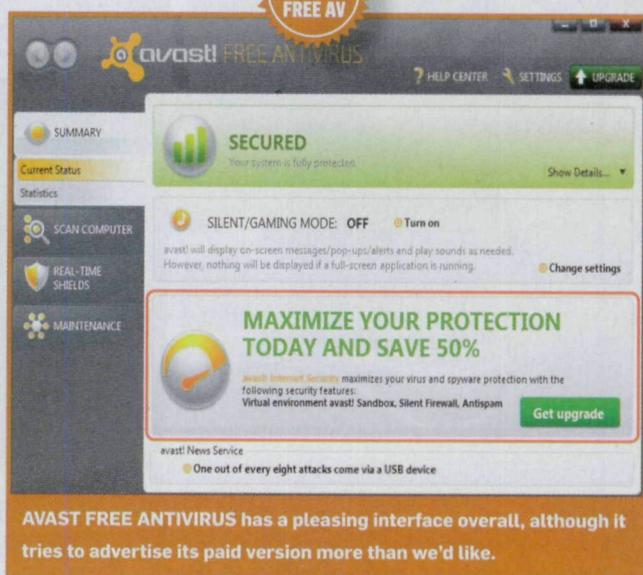
Reviews & Rankings

#1 PAID AV



THE REASONABLY COMPREHENSIVE Norton Antivirus 2011 has a main window that is well laid out and attractive.

#1 FREE AV



AVAST FREE ANTIVIRUS has a pleasing interface overall, although it tries to advertise its paid version more than we'd like.

Free, Paid Antivirus Compared

DEPENDING ON WHOM you ask, paying for antivirus software is either a good (even necessary) investment, or a total rip-off. But you can find plenty of reasons to choose a free program or a paid antivirus application.

We teamed up with security testing company AV-Test, to find out what you get—or

Can free antivirus software protect you? Or is a full-blown program worth paying for? We look at the benefits—and the pitfalls—of each.

don't get—with free antivirus, and when it makes sense to subscribe annually to a fee-based program.

Four levels of antivirus products exist: free, paid antivirus, suites, and “premium” suites. As you move up that ladder, you get more features, such as identity theft protection, firewalls, parental controls, and system performance tools.

Free antivirus software

usually provides a bare minimum level of protection. It will scan for malware, and often can perform automatic scans, too. Some free apps may have tools such as a browser add-on that checks for bad links, and Comodo's free Internet Security Premium has a firewall. But such features are usually limited to paid products. Some free apps offer behavioral malware detection, which finds

malware based on how it acts on your PC—a good way of detecting brand-new malware outbreaks that is standard on paid products.

Paid antivirus straddles a middle ground between freebies and suites, offering more tools (such as identity theft protection and parental controls) and more flexibility than a free package, but fewer features than suites.

One of the biggest drawbacks of a free product is the lack of technical support. Avast does offer e-mail support for its free customers;

MORE ONLINE

For complete reviews and test reports of the products we tested for this story, go online to find.pcworld.com/71017.

INSIDE



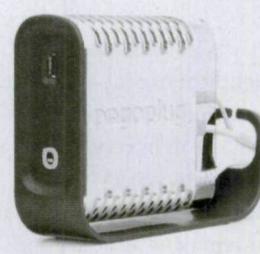
45 GARMIN NUVI 3790t



49 PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-LX5



54 SAMSUNG FOCUS



59 CLOUD ENGINES Pogoplug Biz

most other companies provide only a knowledge base or forum for freebie users. Another trade-off is that free antivirus products often have ads for paid versions.

How about malware signature updates? The security software companies I spoke to say that for signature updates they treat their free and paid products the same, although some under-the-hood differences may exist between their free and paid versions. And one company, Avast, says that its free application is intended for average users, and that its paid antivirus software is for more-advanced users.

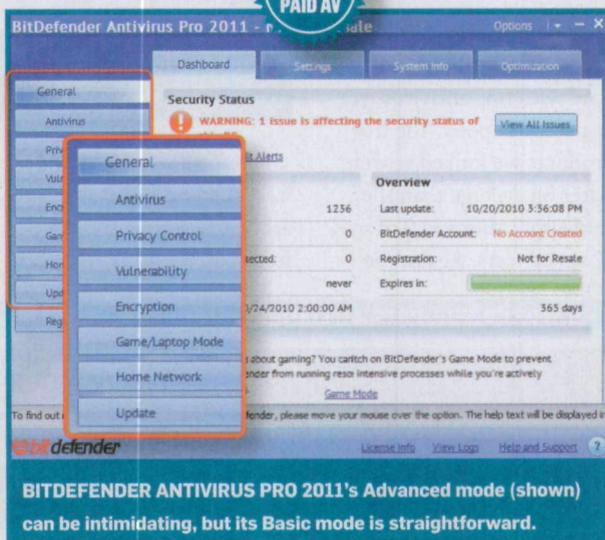
Free products do give you some flexibility.

You can augment a free tool's basic functions with countless security utilities. For instance, you can start with Avast Free Antivirus, and add PCTools Threatfire (which does a good job at bolstering malware detection) and both a firewall (many are available) and a link-scanning utility. This approach requires that you do your homework, though, and it may be more complicated in the long run.

Interface

User interfaces are typically as good (or as bad) in free products as they are in their paid counterparts. Avira and

Avast, for example, use the same basic inter-



BITDEFENDER ANTIVIRUS PRO 2011's Advanced mode (shown) can be intimidating, but its Basic mode is straightforward.

face for their free and paid versions; they just include or leave out certain features.

On the other hand, Panda Cloud Antivirus (a free product) has a different interface and different internals than the paid Panda Antivirus Pro.

Detection

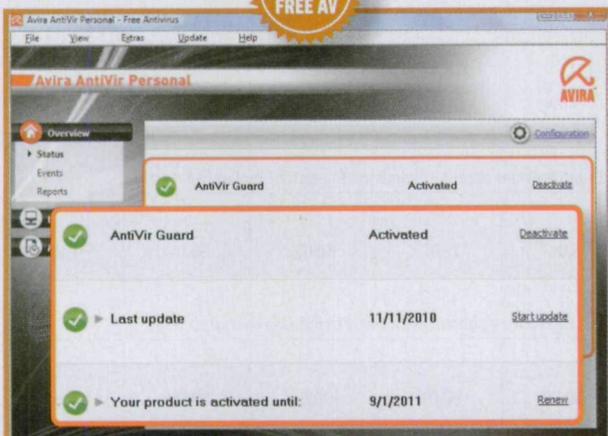
Most of the free products we tested put up identical or nearly identical malware-detection scores as their paid siblings. But we did see some subtle differences. For example, Panda Cloud Antivirus and the company's for-pay Antivirus Pro 2011 performed about the same on signature-based malware-detection tests, but Antivirus Pro did a better job in

real-world malware-detection tests that help determine how well a product can block brand-new threats.

(Note: As we were going to press, Panda released version 1.3 of Panda Cloud Antivirus. The company says that version 1.3 should improve the application's detection of brand-new malware, but the release didn't come in time for us to test. Visit find.pcworld.com/71018 for updates.)

Among the products we tested, paid antivirus apps were a bit better at detecting malware than their freebie counterparts. In removing malware infections, results again were close, with a slight advantage for paid antivirus.

Paid applications did a >>



WE WEREN'T ESPECIALLY impressed by Avira AntiVir Personal's main interface, but it did a good job at detecting malware.

slightly better job overall at removing the active components of an infection, with a 74 percent success rate on average. The same held true for removing all active and inactive components: Paid products achieved a 44 percent removal rate, while free products averaged a full-removal rate of 34 percent.

Speed

Although you lose some effectiveness against malware with free antivirus, you gain a little speed. The free products we looked at were faster on average than the paid applications in 9 of our 12 speed tests. Again, the



difference was slight—the largest speed difference was around 10 percent. Both free and paid antivirus tools

lengthened system startup times: A test PC with no antivirus software booted up in 40.1 seconds on aver-

age. With free antivirus installed, the test system started up in 44.1 seconds on average; with paid antivirus, startup times increased to 46 seconds. We consider the difference slight enough to be statistically insignificant.

But scan speeds were a mixed bag. In our on-demand scan tests, paid antivirus programs edged out the freebies, scanning 4.5GB worth of files in an average of 2 minutes, 25 seconds. Freebies completed the same test in 2 minutes, 44 seconds, on average.

Free and paid products were nearly neck-and-neck in on-access scan tests, >>>

PC WORLD TOP PAID ANTIVIRUS PRODUCTS

PROGRAM	Rating	Antivirus and antispysware detection				Infection cleanup		Design score
		Signature-based detection of malware	Blocking of real-world malware: fully blocked attacks	Blocking of real-world malware: partially blocked attacks	Blocking of real-world malware: missed attacks	Successful cleanup of active malware components ¹	Successful cleanup of active and inactive malware components ²	
1 Norton Antivirus 2011 \$40 for 1 year/1 PC find.pcworld.com/71019	★★★★★ SUPERIOR	98.7%	96.0%	0.0%	4.0%	80.0%	60.0%	Very Good
▶ Norton Antivirus 2011 is a reasonably comprehensive package that provides solid all-around malware detection and cleanup along with a well-designed interface.								
2 BitDefender Antivirus Pro 2011 \$40 for 1 year/3 PCs find.pcworld.com/71020	★★★★★ SUPERIOR	97.5%	68.0%	20.0%	12.0%	80.0%	70.0%	Superior
▶ BitDefender Antivirus Pro 2011 did a good job at detecting and removing malware, but its slow scan speed and its effect on PC performance hold it back.								
3 Avast Pro Antivirus 5 \$40 for 1 year/1 PC find.pcworld.com/71021	★★★★★ VERY GOOD	94.8%	80.0%	4.0%	16.0%	70.0%	30.0%	Good
▶ In the middle of this pack, the easy-to-use Avast Pro Antivirus 5 scans for malware quickly and provides decent—though not top-notch—malware detection.								
4 G-Data AntiVirus 2011 \$30 for 1 year/1 PC find.pcworld.com/71022	★★★★★ VERY GOOD	99.4%	84.0%	4.0%	12.0%	80.0%	60.0%	Fair
▶ Overall, G-Data AntiVirus 2011 put up strong detection and disinfection scores in our tests; it is relatively light on extra features but also costs a bit less.								
5 Kaspersky Anti-Virus 2011 \$40 for 1 year/1 PC find.pcworld.com/71023	★★★★★ VERY GOOD	99.8%	53.7%	100.0%	90.0%	100.0%	50.0%	Good
▶ Kaspersky Anti-Virus 2011 is easy to use and stops attacks well; however, the program drags down a computer's performance more than we would like to see.								

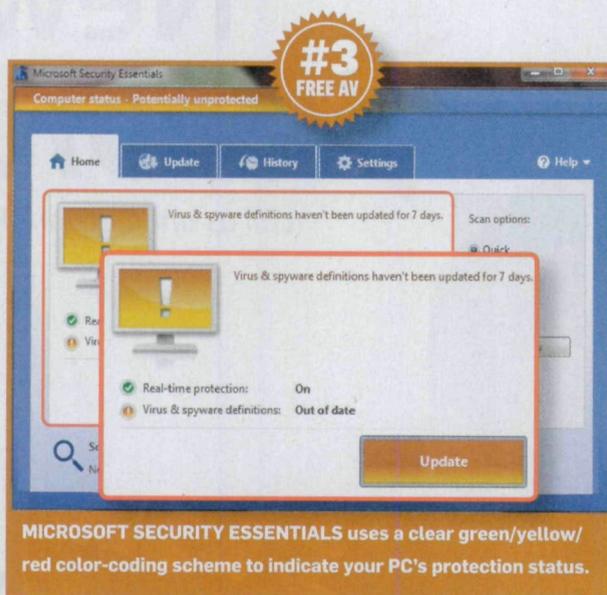
CHART NOTE: Prices are as of 11/3/10. ¹Cleanup of active malware files. Does not include removal of Registry changes or inert files. ²Test conducted at default settings.

which show how quickly the software can scan files for malware when you open or save them. Using the same 4.5GB of files, free products did the test in an average of 4 minutes, 50 seconds. Paid apps took 8 seconds longer.

Top Picks

Since the two classes are so similar in speed and effectiveness, the two biggest factors in your choice should be features and customer support. Expect better support and more-comprehensive security features with a paid application. But if you can forgo those, consider going free.

Which free and paid anti-



MICROSOFT SECURITY ESSENTIALS uses a clear green/yellow/red color-coding scheme to indicate your PC's protection status.

virus products are the best?

Avast Free Antivirus comes out tops among free products thanks to its all-around

strong malware-detection scores, good design, and low system drag. Avira AntiVir Personal takes second place:

It put up solid malware-detection scores, but its interface is kludgy.

Norton Antivirus leads the paid-software pack owing to its excellent malware detection, very good interface design, and comprehensive feature set that includes file-reputation analysis, a cloud-based scanner (which can help identify new malware more quickly), and system performance analysis tools. BitDefender Antivirus Pro 2011 is a close second thanks to strong malware detection; but slow scan speeds and some interface issues prevented it from taking first.

—Nick Mediati

PC WORLD TOP FREE ANTIVIRUS PRODUCTS

PROGRAM	Rating	Antivirus detection		Infection cleanup		Scan speed		Design score
		Signature-based detection of malware	Blocking of real-world malware: fully blocked attacks	Successful cleanup of active malware components ¹	Successful cleanup of inactive malware components ²	Scan speed on-demand ² , in seconds ³	Scan speed on-access ² , in seconds ³	
1 Avast Free Antivirus find.pcworld.com/71024	★★★★★ SUPERIOR	94.8%	76.0%	80.0%	30.0%	90	220	Very Good
▶ Avast Free Antivirus takes the top spot among no-cost virus fighters thanks to its solid malware blocking, pleasant interface, and good speed.								
2 Avira AntiVir Personal find.pcworld.com/71025	★★★★☆ VERY GOOD	99.0%	80.0%	70.0%	30.0%	87	247	Good
▶ Although Avira AntiVir Personal does an excellent job at blocking and detecting malware, its interface needs a makeover.								
3 Microsoft Security Essentials find.pcworld.com/71026	★★★★☆ VERY GOOD	92.7%	64.0%	70.0%	50.0%	126	7	Very Good
▶ Microsoft Security Essentials wins points for a nice interface; its malware detection and blocking test results lower its score.								
4 Panda Cloud Antivirus 1.01 ⁴ find.pcworld.com/71018	★★★★☆ VERY GOOD	99.8%	68.0%	60.0%	50.0%	204	341	Very Good
▶ Panda Cloud Antivirus is an easy-to-use free program; its scanning speeds, however, are significantly slower than average.								
5 Comodo Internet Security Premium find.pcworld.com/71027	★★★★☆ VERY GOOD	92.4%	96.0%	60.0%	10.0%	129	304	Very Good
▶ Comodo Internet Security performed well in blocking real-world malware attacks, but its signature-based detection lagged.								

FOOTNOTES: ¹Cleanup of active malware files. Does not include removal of Registry changes or inert files. ²Test conducted at default settings. ³Time to scan 4500MB of data; lower is better. ⁴As we were going to press, Panda released an update to Cloud Antivirus that the company claims improves its threat-blocking performance.

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