

Free and Legal Software You Can Download

By Tom Krauser

Here is a list of free programs that you can download for your **personal** use. They are legal and free for you to install. Some may have restrictions for non-personal use.

NOTE: When installing software be careful to read the screens that have software offers on them. Many free software offers want to install other products as part of the installation process. It is not that these additional software products are bad but you just may not want them on your computer. During the installation process, look for windows with check boxes or Accept/Decline buttons to ensure you are not installing software products you may not want. Sometimes you have to read the offers very carefully to see how to “decline” the offer to install the additional software. Some examples of this are free software that wants to install the “Ask” search engine and make it your default search engine or it may want you to install a weather program or Google Chrome. If you do accidentally install these products you can always uninstall them using the control panel to remove them. Also, look for check boxes that want you to install the “trial” version of the software because after the “trial” period is over it will start asking you to upgrade and pay for the real version.

CAUTION: Also, due to the way some viruses are installed you may want to go directly to a trusted site to install updates instead of installing through the pop-up that says an update is available. For example, one virus is a “fake” Adobe Flash software update. It tells you that Adobe Flash (used for videos) needs to be updated and to click on the window to update it. It could actually be a virus that will download and install when you click on the Install button. You should go directly to the Adobe site (www.adobe.com) to install the latest version. The same thing applies for updating Java (www.java.com). See discussion on Adobe Flash and Java later.

CAUTION: If you get a pop-up telling you that you have a virus or something wrong with your computer and to click a button to remove the threats and you do not recognize the program giving you the message, you should not click **ANYWHERE** on the pop-up window including the “X” in the upper right hand corner and instead use Task Manager to “end” that process. To start the Task Manager in Windows press **Ctrl-Alt-Delete keys** at the same time. This will bring up a menu then choose Start Task Manager from this menu. When Task Manager is up look under Applications tab and find the application with the same heading as the pop-up windows. Select this application and then click on End Task at the bottom. This will close the application without having to click anywhere in the pop-up windows telling you that you have a virus or problem. If this window keeps coming up it is a sign that you have malware installed and you should run a “Full” virus scan of your computer plus install and run the malware programs discussed later.

Browsers

A browser is the software that you use to connect to the internet with. It provides the Graphical User Interface (GUI) that lays out the web page for your viewing. Windows operating systems automatically come with Internet Explorer (IE). You should have more than one internet browser installed. If Internet Explorer (IE) is your only browser and it gets a virus or corrupted you should have a way to get to the internet to find a repair for IE or update virus scan info. You may find you like one of the following browsers better than IE and you can make it your “default” browser. There are more browsers you can install besides those below.

Mozilla Firefox

<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/desktop/>

Google Chrome

<https://www.google.com/chrome/browser/>

Apple Safari

<http://support.apple.com/kb/DL1531>

The following link does a review of some popular browsers by PC Magazine:

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2365692,00.asp>

Anti-Virus Programs

NOTE: You should only be using one anti-virus program at a time. Using more than one anti-virus program at a time can cause conflicts with each other. You should uninstall any anti-virus programs you are not using.

Windows Defender from Microsoft comes built into Windows 8. Probably due to anti-trust reasons it usually may not be active if a trial version of another anti-virus is installed on the new computer. You can uninstall the trial software and make Windows Defender active.

This is the same program as Microsoft Security Essentials used on earlier versions of Windows.

Microsoft Security Essentials can be downloaded free from Microsoft

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/security-essentials-download>

This is a free anti-virus program from Microsoft. It is used on Windows 7 and Vista. It no longer works with XP but you can use AVG on XP.

AVG Free

<http://www.avg.com/us-en/homepage>

AVG works with Windows XP still.

AVAST Free

<http://www.avast.com/en-us/index>

Comodo Anti-Virus

<http://www.komando.com/downloads/2169/a-full-featured-free-security-suite/2>

Malware Software

Malware are programs that are not considered viruses but can have very detrimental effects on your computer. They can hijack your browser or start downloading programs you do not want. They can redirect your browser to unwanted websites or give pop-up ads you do not want to see. Many anti-virus programs do catch malware but the following programs seem to find malware that the anti-virus programs miss.

Malwarebytes

<http://www.malwarebytes.org/mwb-download/>

The free version of this program has to be run manually and is not real time unless you purchase the paid version. This program finds malware that others don't seem to find. Under Settings/Detection and Protection check the box for Scan for rootkits. Under Settings/Update Settings change the "notify if out of date" setting to 1 day. You may also want to download Spybot - Search and Destroy below for additional protection.

Malwarebytes Anit-Exploit

<http://www.malwarebytes.org/downloads/>

Select Malwarebytes Anti-Exploit Free Download. This runs real time with your anti-virus.

Malwarebytes Anit-Rootkit

<http://www.malwarebytes.org/downloads/>

Select the Malwarebyets Anti-Rootkit (Beta) installation. Install and run the program. This may take awhile to run.

Malwarebytes Chameleon

<http://www.malwarebytes.org/chameleon/>

If your computer is infected and will not let you install malware software try to install Malwarebytes Chamelon. This program is designed to be installed on infected computers to run a malware scan.

Spybot Search and Destroy

<http://www.safer-networking.org/private/>

Spybot - Search and Destroy is very useful to get rid of malware that other programs may not detect. It has found malware that Malwarebytes did not detect. You can download both Malwarebytes and Spybot since both are manually run and do not interfere with each other. They can even be run at the same time as each other and while your anti-virus program is performing a scan. Make sure you click the free version and not the paid or trial version.

Firewalls

Note: You can only run one firewall at a time. A firewall is necessary to keep unauthorized sites from accessing your computer or to block outgoing traffic that may be malicious. Windows comes with its own firewall which is what most people use but many people like to use a 3rd party firewall instead of the Windows firewall. If you install a different firewall you must make sure that the other firewalls are uninstalled or disabled. The firewall installation software will usually disable the Windows firewall automatically as part of the install process.

ZoneAlarm

<http://www.komando.com/downloads/486/free-firewall-to-hide-your-computer-from-hackers>

ZoneAlarm is one of the most popular 3rd party firewalls.

The link below from PC Magazine discusses some free firewall programs:

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2422144,00.asp>

Utility downloads and useful information websites

Kim Komando website

<http://www.komando.com/>

This website gives a lot of useful info and safe downloads. Sign up for her newsletter to get useful tips in your email. You can search the site for downloads you desire. Some downloads can only be downloaded if you belong to her club but many downloads can be accessed by everyone.

CNET website

www.cnet.com

This site gives a lot of information and safe downloads for all kinds of programs. It also gives a lot of reviews of different software that you may find useful.

Belarc Advisor

www.belarc.com

This program gives a lot of useful info about the software and hardware on your computer. You should run the program and print the output to save. It gives hardware/software info including license numbers.

Speccy by Piriform

<http://www.piriform.com/speccy/download>

This program gives information about the software and hardware on the PC.

Internet speed test

www.speedtest.net

This tests the upload and download speeds for your internet provider. Compare the numbers against the speed you are supposed to be getting. Remember that if using wireless connections the wireless router may also limit/reduce the speeds.

CCleaner by Piriform

<http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner>

This free program analyzes and cleans up your computer of unused/unnecessary files. It will also analyze your registry and remove unused or unnecessary entries in your registry. When cleaning the registry it gives the option of backing up the registry before it removes the suggested entries. I recommend that you backup the registry before cleaning it.

NOTE: CC Cleaner can also look at the add-ons for the different browsers and allow you to disable or remove add-ons that may be causing problems with your browsers such as unwanted pop-ups or redirects without the browser being open. I have used this program to get rid of browser pop-ups and redirects. I would recommend using this feature while the browsers are closed to make it easier to remove them.

StickyPad Notes

<http://www.greeneclipse.com/stickypad.html>

You may want to leave notes on your desktop to remind you of upcoming things you want to take care of. StickyPad Notes are Post It notes for your desktop that remind you of things you want to take care of.

Microsoft Office Free Replacement

LibreOffice Suite

<http://www.libreoffice.org/download/libreoffice-fresh/>

Download both program and Help files.

Under Tools/Options select Load/Save then General

Set the different document types to the Microsoft Office 2003/2007/2103 XML version.

This program reads and creates Microsoft Office files.

Photo/Graphics Programs

Picasa by Google

<http://picasa.google.com/>

This is a nice program for keeping track of your photos. On the setup select to locate photos in the normal document areas and not the whole computer. It allows you to easily see all the photos on your computer and gives nice editing features for the photos.

Photoshop replacement – Gimp

<http://www.gimp.org/>

Gimp is a replacement for Photoshop photo editor. It allows you to edit photos and put special effects on photos.

PDF Printer

It is nice to be able to print documents as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file that can be stored as a file or emailed to someone. After you install the PDF printer it becomes a printer choice when you choose the Print button. You select the PDF printer as the desired printer and instead of printing the document out to a physical printer it asks you where you want to save it. You can select any location such as Documents or Desktop and give the document any name that you desire. After it is saved you can attach the file to an email if you want to mail it to someone. The saved document looks exactly like the original document did.

CutePDFWriter

<http://www.acrosoftware.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp>

This program prints documents as PDF files so they can be stored or emailed.

Also have to install the PDF converter program (part of install process). You can select it as the printer to print out PDF files which can be read by anyone and sent as emails.

doPDF Printer

<http://www.dopdf.com/>

Email Tools

If you do not have Microsoft Office and have an older version of Windows, you may only have Outlook Express for your email program. Newer versions of Windows may come with Windows Live Mail. If you want to download your email from the email server to your computer, you can replace Outlook Express with the following program which is equivalent to the version of Outlook that comes with Microsoft Office.

Thunderbird by Mozilla

<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird/>

Free program to replace Microsoft Outlook. This program can automatically download your email from several email programs. Some email programs (such as Yahoo) do not allow email to be downloaded.

Thunderbird Calendar add on.

<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/projects/calendar/>

This add on gives a calendar function to Thunderbird.

Zimbra

http://download.cnet.com/Zimbra-Desktop/3000-2367_4-10868288.html

Free program to replace Microsoft Outlook. Get e-mail, contacts, and calendar all in one application. Easily set up Zimbra, Yahoo, Mail Plus, AOL and Gmail email accounts with the Account Wizard. Any POP or IMAP email account can be added to Zimbra Desktop, there's no limit to the size of your email storage, and Zimbra Desktop works online and offline.

The following link shows 11 email programs that are free that you can use to handle email.

http://email.about.com/od/windowsemailclients/tp/free_email_prog.htm

Adobe Reader

Adobe Reader used to read PDF files.

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/?promoid=KLXME>

Install the latest version of Adobe Reader for reading PDF files.

Adobe Flash

Adobe Flash is used by many programs to support graphics and video. It may already be installed on your computer. If you get a message saying Flash needs to be updated verify the actual update link it to adobe.com, you can always go directly to the adobe site to ensure you have the latest version. Go to the following site:

<https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

I create a shortcut link on my desktop to go directly to this site for updates:

Right click on desktop and choose New then Shortcut.

Copy the link above into the location field then click Next.

Type Adobe Flash Update for name of shortcut then click Finish.

You can also change the Icon by right clicking on the Icon and select Properties.

Click Change Icon to see available icons. If you do not see any icons you like you can browse to the following file:

C:\Windows\System32\Shell32.dll or C:\Windows\System32\moricons.dll

These files contains a lot of different icons you can choose from.

Select the icon you like for the shortcut and then click OK. Then click Apply and OK.

Java

There is a lot of controversy on whether Java should be installed or not. A lot of malware uses weaknesses in Java to install their programs. There are some programs that require Java to be installed in order to work. The following site should be used to ensure that your Java is the latest version. It can also remove older versions of Java if they are installed. Be sure to uncheck the additional software suggestions or decline them during the installation process.

www.java.com

I create a shortcut link on my desktop to go directly to this site for updates:

Right click on desktop and choose New then Shortcut.

Copy the link above into the location field then click Next.

Type Java Update for name of shortcut then click Finish.

You can also change the Icon by right clicking on the Icon and select Properties.

Click Change Icon to see available icons. If you do not see any icons you like you can click on Browse then browse to the following file:

C:\Windows\System32\Shell32.dll or C:\Windows\System32\moricons.dll

These files contains a lot of different icons you can choose from.

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