

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 168: Microsoft Security Essentials

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I am a great believer in freeware. I also want my computers (and the ones I rebuild for ARES/RACES use throughout Wisconsin) to be protected. The logical answer for me is, and has been, Microsoft Security Essentials.

Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE) was released to the public at the end of September 2009, and Version 2 was released mid-December 2010. At that point in time, it had gained 30 million users. In September 2011, it was announced that it would be integrated into the upcoming Windows 8 operating system. At that point, it had become the second most popular antivirus product in the world, and the most popular in the USA.

This security program is an anti-virus package that also protects against spyware and adware. Thus, it is probably best described as an anti-malware program. It is free for household use, and free for use on up to 10 computers in small businesses.

I have been using antivirus software since the Norton product was first released as part of Norton Utilities, over 20 years ago. Besides this pay-for product, I have also used the free products, AVG, Comodo, Avast, Avira and ClamWin. One complaint I always had was that, at least the early versions I used, were resource hogs – taking a lot of space on the hard drive, taking a lot of memory away from the operating system and generally slowing things down. When I tried and settled on MSE, it was because it was not an “in your face” product. It is also not a memory hog and does not take a lot of hard drive space. A recent comparison by Fred Langa in the Windows Secrets Newsletter (<http://www.windowsecrets.com>) confirmed this to be true. MSE fared very well on four tests, when compared with AVG, Comodo, Avast, Avira and ClamWin.

| MEASURE | DEFINITION |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Startup Time | How much time the antivirus product added to Windows startup. |
| Shutdown Time | How much time the antivirus product added to Windows shut down. |
| RAM Footprint | How much memory the product consumed. |
| Disk Footprint | How much hard drive space the product used. |

His conclusions confirm his recommendation (and mine) that MSE is a good program. As Fred says, “It’s free, it’s in widespread use, and it has proven itself in the real world.”

The bottom line is that MSE can protect your system with very little impact on how fast your machine operates, and it is FREE. My suggestion is that if your (paid for or free) antivirus program seems to be slowing things down, uninstall it and install MSE. (You must uninstall. To run two antivirus programs at the same time in a machine is asking for trouble.) Try it for a while and see if things are better. If not, you can always uninstall it and put your old software back. But I bet you will like and keep it. It simply works, and it is not “in your face”. I take the time to install it on every ARES/RACES machine that I prepare (23 so far this year; over 600 since I began the program).

By the way, if you DON'T have antivirus software installed on your machine, you are flirting with disaster. Install MSE post haste! Happy Computing!