

## THE COMPUTER CORNER

### No. 181: AntiVirus Programs

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MaximumPC is my favorite computer magazine. Although it is supposedly a gamer's publication, it contains much more than that. For example, the last issue had articles on *PC Builder's Bible*, *Windows Networking* and *Battle of the AV Suites*. I would like to reflect a bit on the latter, antivirus programs.

They reviewed both pay-for and freeware versions, and I found it interesting that Norton Internet Security took the gold cup among those that must be paid for. Norton was top dog many years ago but then took a nosedive when it became bloatware and bogged down the machines with in-your-face pop-ups and slow, resource-robbing programming. Glad to see they have reversed all that and now give their customers real value for their money.

More interesting to me is their review of the freeware programs – Avast, Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE) and AVG. Avast was the top rated of the three, and so I decided to try it. I installed it on my number 2 machine after removing MSE (note that you may well have serious problems if you have more than one antivirus program running on a machine at the same time).

Once installed and registered (a requirement within 30 days), I noticed a persistent nagging to upgrade to the paid version and banner ads in the main menu. This in-your-face approach really frosts my opinion of any software. Now, if an antivirus program finds a dangerous file, the in-your-face approach is warranted and desirable, but not as a mechanism to generate more income for the software company. Beyond that, the machine slowed considerably when the scanner was active, even though it is a relatively fast machine with lots of memory. After a few days of testing, I gave up. I uninstalled it and went back to MSE.

MSE is still my pick for an antivirus program, and I continue to install it on all machines I rebuild for ARES/RACES units in Wisconsin (44 of them in 2012). It downloads updates in the background, scans in the background and does a very reasonable job of protecting your machine. I still believe that, if you have a \*router between your computers and the Internet, and the built-in firewall that comes with all modern versions of Windows is in place, MSE is your best choice. It is the least conspicuous antivirus program I have seen, and it does work. Yesterday, it found and killed some malware that my wife's (KC9FZK) machine, picked up while she was playing Sudoku on the web! I have said it before: while I am no big fan of Microsoft's programming, this is one package they seem to have gotten right.

Happy computing!

*\*All computers should have a router connected between them and the Internet, even if they are the only computer on the router. A router provides a hardware firewall in addition to the software firewall built into Windows. You can pick one up at a swapfest these days for around \$10. Do it!*

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"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."

Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949