

There's a lot of noise online about the top antivirus programs. Everyone seems to have an opinion on what the best program is. And this leads to confusion for people who are looking for antivirus software. To sift through this noise and find the right software for your needs, you'll need to read unbiased reviews and ratings of the top antivirus programs.

We recommend that you read reviews from customers online. But more importantly, you need to be aware of the ratings and reviews that experts have written. With these you get an unbiased assessment of all the top antivirus programs and get to choose the best one for your computer.

Not many people know who the experts are in the security industry. And that's not really surprising, considering they charge for their test results. So you'll normally only see mention of them on comparison sites like Top Ten Reviews and Best Buy Antivirus and sometimes on the antivirus manufacturer websites, boasting of the awards they've received from these experts.

There are 5 expert reviewers and they are known as Test Labs and are West Coast Labs, ICSA, Virus Bulletin, AV-Test and AV-Comparatives.

BitDefender

AV-Test rated BitDefender on its performance on the latest operating system, Windows 7. It shows that BitDefender has scored 100% for protection, 83% for repair and 92% for usability. These scores are higher than what other antivirus programs have scored. And only Kaspersky has come close to the rating on BitDefender.

Virus Bulletin has also tested BitDefender on Windows 7 and XP. And it has been awarded the VB100 rating which is a 100% effectiveness score against 'in the wild' viruses.

The features and tools in BitDefender Antivirus are the best you'll find. And all the experts agree that they are the most effective against malware threats and other threats like phishing

attacks, hackers, keyloggers, rootkits and others.

Kaspersky

Kaspersky has also received a 100% rating from AV-Test for its protection against malware on Windows 7. The test also shows that it has a 75% score on repair and 83% usability on Windows 7. These results are impressive and place Kaspersky in the top list of antivirus software programs.

It has been rated by ICISA and West Coast Labs (W.C.L.) too and the results show that it's highly effective against malware threats. AV-Comparatives have awarded Kaspersky an A+ rating and W.C.L. has verified it for antivirus, anti-spyware and anti-malware protection.

AV-Test has reported no false negative detections on Kaspersky and shows it has 100% success rates at detecting new malware threats. The test carried out by AV-Test shows that it removed 23 out the 23 malware programs installed on the test PC.

Summary

The tests performed by these expert test labs reveal important information about these software programs. The tests are a practical assessment of how these antivirus programs perform in the real world where it really matters. And you want to be sure your software is very effective and doesn't leave your PC vulnerable to malware threats.

Paid Vs Free Antivirus Software

You might reasonably be wondering about whether or not free antivirus software is going to be able to provide you with the protection that your system is going to need. If you've gotten to that point, then clearly, you've already been convinced of the importance of antivirus software to begin with, which is a good thing. Though old antivirus programs did slow people's systems

down, new ones take precautions against needless reductions in performance. Still, that's an example of precisely the type of feature that some of your free options may not come with. There are other considerations to be made when processing such a decision as well, and we're about to examine a few of them.

Actually More Than Two Choices

There are actually more than two choices to consider when selecting which level of antivirus protection you prefer. At the lowest end of the spectrum, of course, is the totally free product. The next rung up the ladder is paid software, and there are two different categories here. First, there's the type of paid antivirus software which you only have to pay for one time. Secondly, there are pieces of antivirus software which only function as long as you pay an annual subscription fee. For your money, you get periodic updates which keep your system's protection optimized and priority access (usually for free) to entirely new versions of the software as they're released.

Further Considerations

Additional options for you to consider include "suites" and "premium suites." These sets usually include other security tools in addition to the antivirus software itself, such as parental controls and identity theft protection. In a one hundred eighty degree turnaround from the early history of antivirus software, some of these suites even include additional tools to enhance your system's performance. As a result, your system will actually work better as a result of the installation of these suites, not worse. Obviously, as you move up the ladder in these choices, more features are added to your software's capabilities. At the free level, you generally get only a bare minimum level of protection. For some people, though, that's satisfactory.

So How Do You Decide?

First, you have to decide what's important to you personally. If you're just looking for antivirus protection itself and the additional tools available aren't of interest to you, then you can definitely afford to askew the higher end suites. In fact, you may even be able to get by with just a free product, as long as its one that's still updated often. In general, however, like with so many things, your best bet is to go with a middle-of-the-road option such as as one of the paid,

stand-alone antivirus programs. They usually have better technical support assistance when you need it, as well as a more regular diet of virus signature updates. That way, you'll know your computer is well protected, and if you run into any trouble, you'll have somebody to contact.

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