

Viruses, Worms, Trojans, Spyware and Hoaxes - What are They and How to Protect Your Computer. Part 2 - Freeware Solutions

In our last issue we defined the above mentioned terms and discussed some commercially available solutions (software). If you missed the last issue and would like a copy please send an email to tech_talk@b-b-inc.com requesting Volume 1 Number 2.

As promised, here are some freeware/donationware solutions. Some of these are free only for non-commercial use. I will list only one item of software per category (the most popular) but there are several more in each category. If you would like a list of alternative software, please send me an email at bob@rsblum.com.

First, Antivirus software. As mentioned in the previous issue, antivirus software can scan your system, incoming emails, and downloads for viruses, trojans, and worms. As with commercial software, **antivirus freeware is only effective if you have the latest virus definitions.**

Freeware solution: AVG Anti Virus - (You MUST register to install - but it is free for non-commercial use) - <http://www.grisoft.com/>. click on "AVG Free Edition" in the left hand column to download.

Second, Firewall software. This software can prevent others from connecting to your computer while you are connected to the internet.

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Freeware solution: ZoneAlarm - www.zonelabs.com. Click on Zone Alarm (free) which will take you to a page that lists their firewall products (not just the free one). Then choose to download Zone Alarm - not the "Plus" or "Pro" products. As an aside, I believe that their Pro product is worth the investment. The pop-up blocker and other additional features work very well.

If you want to protect several computers, you may want to consider using a standalone computer dedicated to only being a firewall. This can be done with an old computer using Linux and Icop (both free open source software) so the expense should be minimal.

Third, Antispyware software. Since the last issue of Tech Talk I have had several instances where a customer's computer was "infected" with hundreds of pieces of spyware/malware. One computer kept getting popup ads every 15 seconds, another Pentium 4 with 512 meg of RAM was running at the speed of a 486.

Freeware solution: Spybot Search and Destroy - <http://security.kolla.de>. Click on download in the left-hand column. Then go to the bottom of the page to download the program. After installing the program you should run the program and click on "search for updates" to make sure you have the latest definitions. Like antivirus software, antispyware software needs to be updated on a regular basis.

Please be aware the Antispyware software can cause some freeware programs to stop functioning, so use this with caution. As an example, KaZaA uses spyware (KaZaA Lite does not).

Fourth, keep your Windows® operating system up-to-date with the latest security patches.

While there have been some Microsoft operating system patches which have had undesired side effects, the security patches are relatively safe. I have found it best to install only security patches and

then install the Service Release (SR1, SR2, etc.) patches when they become available from Microsoft. When you install the SR patches make sure you save, i.e. backup, your present files (this is an option when you install). That way if you don't like the SR patch it is a simple task to go to uninstall programs and uninstall the patch.

If users had installed the Microsoft MSBlast patch when it was released in July, they would have saved themselves a lot of grief the week of August 11th when the MSBlast worm hit full force.



If you would like further assistance in protecting your system(s), please call or email us at 303-679-1440 or bob@rsblum.com for immediate assistance.

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