

The computer market is full of antivirus software suites, stating that theirs is the best and promising you excellent detection results and safe surfing on the web. The only problem with some of this information is that it tends to be bias.

Either the reviews are written by an affiliate who receives a commission for each sale or the antivirus company itself provides its own promotional information to convince you to buy.

This article will provide you with the steps required to performance test any antivirus software suites that you may be interested in purchasing to run on your PC. The test results will provide you with real-time information about how the antivirus packages run on your PC, allowing you to make the right purchasing decision first time round.

Preparation

Before you take the plunge and start testing your antivirus suites, you should give your PC a performance service with one of the many free utilities available online.

Advanced System Care is a good clean-up/tweak utility that will give your PC a deep clean with a simple one-click interface. Before running any clean-up program, make sure you have a current data backup. Once you have used Advanced System Care, you may leave it installed if it does not impact too much on your PC's resources or just uninstall it.

As a side note, you can possibly help your computers performance as well by editing your system's start-up file by using the 'msconfig' utility to disable any unnecessary auto start apps when your PC starts up. If you are not familiar with this process and are unsure as to what to disable then just use the Advanced System Care program.

Online Research

Although you can gather some useful information from the reviewer or the vendor's website, it is always wise to check the online forums or read independent reviews about the product you are researching, which do not have a bias, prior to your purchase.

One recommended website that offers an unbiased review is av-comparatives.org and provides test results for many antivirus products.

The two test results of interest are the detection and removal results, as you will be doing your own performance testing to see how the antivirus suites affect your particular PC within its own hardware/software environment. The detection and removal results are displayed by clicking on the 'comparatives' tab on the main page of [av-comparatives](http://av-comparatives.org) website.

Not Created Equal

The main reason for performance testing antivirus products is that not all antivirus packages are created equal when it comes to providing PC and web browsing protection, memory usage, background scanning speeds, virus detection and removal, etc.

Minimum Requirements

Antivirus suites should have at least the following modules:

- * Antivirus
- * Antirootkit
- * Anti-Phising
- * Antispyware
- * Antimalware
- * Antitrojan
- * Antiworm
- * Antispam
- * Safe Browsing
- * Firewall

- * Real time monitoring
- * Scheduled scanning
- * Automatic definition updating

Create a Short List

You will need to create a short list of the antivirus packages available that fit the above criteria for downloading, based on your online research.

Online Antivirus Scan

If you do not have any antivirus software currently installed on your PC and you have been surfing the web, then I strongly suggest you scan your system with an online antivirus scanner before you download and install any trial antivirus suites.

To do this, just type in the Google search box "free online antivirus scanner" (without the quotes) and chose a well-known scanner such as Trend, AVG, Kaspersky, Comodo, McAfee or Eset then just follow the onscreen instructions to install the necessary software for the online scanner to run. Once the scan has completed and removed any infections, if any, then you are ready to download, install and start testing your trial antivirus suites.

Installed Antivirus Software

If you currently have any antivirus software already installed on your system then this must first be uninstalled completely and your system restarted before installing any trial antivirus packages.

Recommended Uninstaller Program

A good uninstaller program that is free is Revo Uninstaller. It does an excellent job of cleaning the registry of any leftover entries from your old antivirus program that its own uninstaller leaves behind.

To locate the uninstaller program just type into Google "free Revo Uninstaller" (without the quotes), then download and install it.

After you have downloaded and installed Revo Uninstaller, use it to uninstall your current antivirus program. Check pages 6-9 of the help guide by clicking on the help tab on the Revo Uninstaller menu bar to take you through the uninstall procedure.

If for some reason, when you go to install an antivirus trial and it will not install due to some leftover files from the previous antivirus program then download the previous installed antivirus programs removal utility from the vendor's web site and run it.

N.B. Restart your computer after you have uninstalled the antivirus program.

System Resource Usage

The first and most important consideration when testing any antivirus suites is to note the amount of memory and computer resources it uses when running in the background and/or performing a scheduled scan, as this will be one of the deciding factors in your purchase.

Therefore, before installing any trial software you will need to check and note down how much memory and CPU resource is currently being used on your system, so you can compare it to the memory and CPU usage of your trial antivirus suites.

How to Check System Resource Usage

To check current memory and CPU usage on a Windows 7/Vista computer, right-click on the task bar (the task bar is the grey/blue bar at the bottom of your screen) then left-click on 'start task manager'

To check current memory and CPU usage on a Windows XP/2000 computer, right-click on task bar (the task bar is the grey area at the bottom of your screen) then left-click on 'start task manager'

Click on the "performance" tab within "windows task manager". This screen shows memory and CPU usage of your computer.

Once you have noted the memory and CPU usage without the trial software installed on your system you can now go ahead and install the trial antivirus package.

After it has been installed and you have restarted your system you need to repeat the above memory and CPU check to note how much memory and CPU resource is being used by the trial antivirus software.

You then need to run a full antivirus scan of your system and repeat the memory and CPU check while the antivirus scan is running. Again, note the memory and CPU usage.

While the scan is still running, open and close a few programs and see how your computer performs. Type some text into notepad and note the response time. Your system will be slower than usual because of the file scanning but it still should be usable with an acceptable delay.

Once the file scan has completed, repeat the process of opening and closing some programs and using notepad to enter text. These quick tests should operate normally and without delay.

If there is a noticeable delay (much more than usual), then the trial antivirus program is using too much of your computers resources. This may be remedied by installing additional memory

but for the meantime, we need to continue with our testing before we make any decision to purchase additional memory.

Once you have completed your testing of the first antivirus trial suite, uninstall it as per the instructions above with the Revo Uninstaller program and repeat the testing process for the other antivirus trial suite software you have downloaded.

Results

With your testing completed, you can now make an informed decision as to which of the antivirus suites best suits your PC. If you have a preferred antivirus package but it is impacting too much on your computers performance, then you have two choices, install additional ram (that is if the ram can be upgraded) or settle for another antivirus suite that does not impact on your PC's performance.

If your PC performed badly with all of the antivirus trial software, the memory cannot be upgraded and you ran the Advanced System Care before testing the trial software then your system may require a re-installation of the operating system. Be aware that re-installing the operating system may not resolve the problem if the PC's hardware is too old. This leaves you with the option of replacing your computer or finding an antivirus package that will not adversely affect your PC.

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