

The only time that you can safely say that your computer is safe from attacks, malware, and viruses is when your computer is either off or disconnected from the network. But, since such a computer is practically useless for the tasks of the modern-day workplace, connecting to a local network or to the Internet has become a necessity. Is there a way for your online life to remain safe and healthy? One important way is to use antivirus firewall software.

Antivirus firewall software often comes as a bundle of separate programs packaged into one security suite. Though, there are antivirus programs that can be installed as stand-alone applications. There are also stand-alone firewall programs that can replace the bundled basic Windows Firewall that gets installed with recent or updated versions of the Microsoft Windows operating system.

Antivirus software and firewall software are both protective measures for your computer. They have different ways of protecting your computer. For this reason, it is important that you install both (if buying separate programs for each), or make the job easier by choosing an antivirus firewall software suite.

How does an antivirus program protect your computer? To answer this question adequately, you have to understand how computer viruses work. Computer viruses are software programs or computer codes that display two specific characteristics. The first characteristic of a computer virus is its ability and intent to destroy data on your computer. The second characteristic is its ability to reproduce copies of itself and to infect other computers. If your computer is connected to a network, it is easy for your computer to become infected by other virus-infested computers on the network or to infect other computers if your computer is infected.

An antivirus program helps prevent the spreading of computer viruses. The antivirus program relies on technology that allows it to detect virus infection in software programs. Most antivirus programs also allow you to choose how to deal with an infected program or file. In most cases, you can instruct the antivirus program to try to remove the malicious code that has been injected into a program, or to completely delete the infected file or program, or to isolate the program. If you have antivirus firewall software installed on your computer, it should be able to perform the job of an antivirus program and a firewall.

How does a firewall program protect your computer? A firewall program works very much like a

real firewall--a wall that prevents fire from spreading from one building to the adjacent ones. A firewall program does this by "listening" to computer ports where data and information pass through. If the firewall program detects unusual or unexpected activity in a port, it will alert you so that you can deal with it. Or, it will automatically resolve the issue based on instructions that you save in a configuration file. A firewall program can block connections from the outside world that may open up your computer to virus infections, malicious attacks, unauthorized software that can harm your computer, and other threats. To get the most protection for your computer, it is advisable to install an antivirus program along with your firewall program, or to install an antivirus firewall software suite.

By installing antivirus firewall software, you avoid making your computer a sitting duck for various destructive and malicious attacks from the outside world. It should be the very first thing to do after installing your operating system so that you won't have to lose very important files and data on your computer.

In the not too distant past, antivirus firewall software did not exist. You would have to purchase antivirus software, firewall software and spyware all separately. There was not an all in one package containing all three together in the same suite like there is today. Software manufacturers are now making software in combination packages that are a perfect fit for small business owners and home computer use too.

Antivirus Firewall Software comprises three parts. One is the antivirus portion that keeps viruses from attacking your system and can remove those already on your system. Another part of the system is the Firewall software that prevents any information from your computer or to your computer without your permission in the prescribed code written into the software. The third part of the software would be the Spyware Software to prevent and remove Spyware from your system.

Why do you need all this protection you ask? Antivirus Software is to prevent and remove viruses from your computer. Firewall software is to prevent hackers and hacking software from accessing your personal information like bank account numbers or your identity. Spyware software is to prevent and remove Spyware from your system. Spyware tracks your movement on the Internet for reasons that can be good or bad. The good is depositing cookies on your computer to recognize you when you revisit a site. Banks use this type of cookie to help keep other people from accessing your information for example. Some sites use cookies for advertising purposes. Some of these are harmless and some are not.

How does each of these work you ask? Antivirus Software scans all incoming data from email, Internet downloads and file sharing you may have with other people. Any good Antivirus program updates itself often to keep up with all the new known codes viruses are written with. Without keeping current the software can not know which codes to exclude. New viruses are written constantly in very large numbers. Virus codes can be very complex and creative but are written in code just like beneficial software. Keeping up to date is critical for good protection.

All computers talk to each other using data packets. This is where Firewall Software comes in. It is the job of the Firewall Software to monitor this data for corrupted or altered packets of info. It will not allow any data to enter your system if it notes any packets that are not written into the software to accept. The software can even pop up a box to ask if you want to accept this type of data if it is not recognized. Good Firewall Software is needed to keep your system safe.

The third part of this software suite is Antispyware Software. Spyware programs are not designed to crash your operating system but are designed to spy on all your activity on the Internet as well as files on your computer and gather that data for someone else's benefit. Antispyware Software is to keep this software from attaching to your computer system and to remove any of this software already on your system. Spyware can cripple your system performance over time if it allowed on your system. I have seen computers with hundreds of spyware cookies on the system and the computer was so slow it was unusable. After the spyware was removed the computer operated at normal speed.

My advice is to purchase good Antivirus Firewall Software and keep it updated. With this type of software loaded on your system you can enjoy your computer for surfing the Internet and for file sharing with your friends or for business purposes.

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