

AVG Internet Security 8.0

A FIERCE PROTECTOR WHEN IT COMES TO WEB THREATS, BUT MERELY MIDDLING ELSEWHERE

PRICE \$95 per year for three PCs; \$140 per two years for three PCs **INTERNET** www.avg.com.au

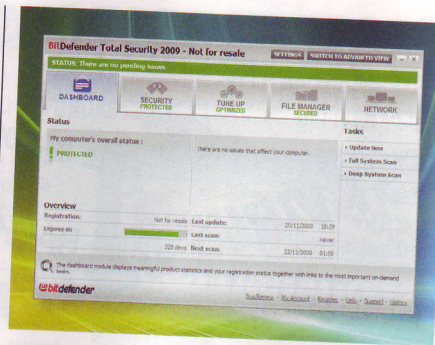
Most of us have used AVG's free antivirus package, and the same engine underpins the company's full security suite. The suite also includes a firewall, email integration and anti-spam, plus extras such as rootkit detection and IM protection. Those are good things to have, but considering the basic malware component can be had for free it doesn't seem like great value.

Our malware detection tests only strengthened that impression. A score of just 80% left AVG near the bottom of the class, missing Trojans, diallers, backdoors and more. When we probed the test PC with our network scanner, we found five potential vulnerabilities and six open TCP ports - more than any other package. We were less than impressed by the firewall too, which was unnecessarily confusing to configure and intrusive once we'd done so.

We were also turned off by the way the program's browser tool bar includes a Yahoo! search box which can't be closed - and by the way 'page not found' errors are, by default, redirected to another page with a Yahoo! search field. We might excuse that sort of shilling in a free program, but not in a paid-for suite.

AVG's trump card is web-based detection. Clearly the company's acquisition of Exploit Protection Labs and its LinkScanner package at the end of 2007 is paying off. By combining URL blacklists with real-time detection, AVG achieved a 74% success rate with dodgy websites - streets ahead of any competition. If your prime concern is web-based threats, it might make sense to invest in AVG Internet Security, since the browser protection module isn't included in the free edition. But for all-round peace of mind we'd go with a more balanced package such as Avira.

EASE OF USE ★★★★★
 PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
OVERALL ★★★★★



BitDefender Total Security 2009

A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE, BUT NOT THE MOST USABLE OR EFFECTIVE

PRICE \$74 per year for one PC; \$87 per year for three PCs **INTERNET** www.bitdefender.com.au

BitDefender Total Security offers all the usual components, plus online backup with 2GB of storage, parental controls, file encryption, identity protection and even a duplicate file finder. There's a more basic Internet Security package too, but this fully-loaded edition costs no more than many simpler competing suites.

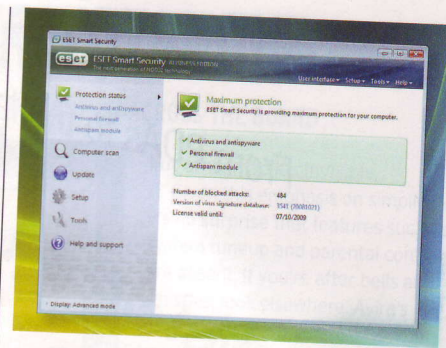
Key features haven't been neglected: the 92% malware detection test was this month's second highest overall, and its score of 57% in our web threats test placed it a respectable fourth.

We did have a few reservations: BitDefender left our machine more exposed to direct network attacks than we'd like, with six high- and medium-risk vulnerabilities accessible as well as two TCP ports used by worms. Its RAM footprint was on the larger side, and it kept grinding long after the test machine had booted. Its icon didn't even appear in the system tray until 40 seconds after the desktop had appeared.

There are some presentational niggles too. At one point the firewall complained about a process called "signcheck": this turned out to be a component of BitDefender itself. One database update ticked all the way up to 276% before finishing. And we found the overall look of the program cold and alienating.

Still, it's easy to get at all the basic controls, and there are numerous thoughtful features. In laptop mode it will optionally postpone scans and skip backups when running on battery power. An extendable list of known games tells the firewall when to automatically go into silent mode. Total Security 2009's do-everything approach won't suit everyone, but if you're not precious about memory or boot time it has a lot to recommend it.

EASE OF USE ★★★★★
 PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
OVERALL ★★★★★



Eset Smart Security

BREATHTAKINGLY LIGHTWEIGHT, BUT DETECTION RATES COULD BE BETTER

PRICE \$93 per year for one PC; \$167 per year for three PCs **INTERNET** www.eset.com.au

Smart Security impressed us straight away with its incredibly small footprint: it occupied the least RAM of any package this month, and had the smallest impact on CPU usage and boot time.

We enjoyed setting it up, too: the interface is one of the clearest this month, with even 'advanced mode' presenting all your options in a logical and easy-to-understand way. Double-click on the System Tray icon and the interface leaps up instantly. Many rival packages could learn a lot from Eset.

The firewall continued this theme, bringing up a clear requester asking us to choose between 'strict protection' and 'allow sharing', along with explanations of our choices in plain English. It worked well, too: when we probed it with our security scanner we found just one high-risk vulnerability and three open TCP ports.

We also liked the way Smart Security integrated with Windows Mail. It installed a new Spam toolbar, which perfectly matched the look and feel of existing controls, and created a new folder for infected items. When rogue messages were detected, Smart Security removed the attachment and put the details in the subject line, so we could see at a glance what it had done.

It may sound like Eset has created the perfect suite, but sadly there's a caveat. Smart Security didn't disgrace itself in our malware tests, but its performance was merely average: it scored 87% in our file-based test and managed a hit-rate of just 14% against web threats.

For this reason, it's hard to give Smart Security an unreserved endorsement, though for a low-risk environment it's a very likeable option.

EASE OF USE ★★★★★
 PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
OVERALL ★★★★★

