

"Secure your computer. Get the best anti-virus and firewall software and remove all the software that slows your computer down. All for FREE!"

Max Davies

Computer Security

How To Secure Your Computer For Free!



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Author: Max Davies

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This book is 100% free. Please pass it on to anyone who might find it useful.

All I ask is that you don't edit it or change it in any way.

Disclaimer

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Welcome.

This book has been created to give small business owners, photographers and home computer users the right advice for protecting their computers for minimal cost (mostly free) and with minimal hassle.

We all know how annoying computer security can be. Most computers come laden with free trials of expensive security software. Then when the trial expires you are left with annoying pop-ups and no idea what to do next. Do you pay the exorbitant yearly fee? Or do you take a risk? How likely are you to get a virus really?

The dilemma is we know that you need security but you also know that money is tight and we don't want to spend a fortune on something that may or may not work...

So what can you do? You need security but you also can't afford to pay for every gleaming piece of security software out there.

So which ones do you choose?

And how much is too much?

This book is the alternative to purchasing expensive over hyped software. It's the result of an obsession of mine over the last 10 years. I've downloaded, tried and uninstalled pretty much every piece of major security software for my computers. I've dabbled. I've played. I've gotten annoyed and eventually I've stuck with a very small group of software that has kept me safe.

And the great thing is, all this wonderful software can be had for free and it's all perfectly legal.

So follow along with me and together, we'll clean out the crap and install the best of the best free security software. And it's all so simple you can do it in just a few minutes in-between clients (or get your kids or staff to do it in their downtime).

Note: This book has been designed for PC users. Since I'm a PC user and that's what I know. I have it on good authority that Mac owners don't really need this sort of information because the hackers don't really care about creating viruses for Macs

It should also be noted that no software can make you 100% safe all the time. But these programs I'm about to recommend, in my opinion, will get you 99% safe.

Quick Summary

Before we get started I'm going to give you a quick summary so you know exactly what we are going to do.

1. **Crap Removal** – This is the section where we get rid of all the unwanted software that sits on your computer bugging you with pop-ups and nagging you to buy the latest and greatest (usually expensive) version. We'll also take a look at your computers "Startup List". By trimming down the startup list you can greatly speed up your computer.
2. **Anti-Virus** – Probably one of the most important aspects of computer security is getting hold of a good anti-virus program. It has to be good to get rid of all the bad stuff out there. But it also has to be easy to use and easy to update or you'll never use it properly. And a poorly used/updated anti-virus program is probably worse than none at all.
3. **Firewall** – The firewall is what stops all the bad people online from pinging and hacking into your computer and it also stops all the software on your computer from dialling home. Some you may want to call home – your anti-virus wants to get the latest updates for example, but do you really need your word processor to go online and check for updates EVERY single time. And what about the unknown software that suddenly dials out. Is this a virus? Or spyware reporting home? This is where the Firewall becomes essential!

I have to point out that most computers do already have Firewall software built in, but call me paranoid, I have never trusted the built in firewall. I always wonder is it the best? And how much information is being sent back to the Operating System manufacturer? As a result I like to add an extra layer of Firewall security.

4. **Safe Browsing** – One of the easiest ways to get a virus is through bad browsing habits; going to the dark corners of the internet and downloading stuff you shouldn't be downloading or even just viewing pages that have been hacked and are waiting to steal your personal information from you. Whilst this book isn't necessarily about keeping your information safe online, if you get hold of a safe, secure browser and add-on a few choice programs you can make your browsing a hell of a lot safer. So that's what we will look at in this section.

5. **Offsite Backup** – So now we have a computer safe from online threats we also have to consider what we can do to stay safe in the event of physical calamities ranging from spilling coffee on your computer to fire, floods, hurricanes and burglaries. Luckily there is a very simple solution.

Okay, ready to go? Let's get started.

Note: To clean your computer I am going to recommend that you reboot quite often, therefore it might be easier if you print this book before starting.

First. Remove The Crap!

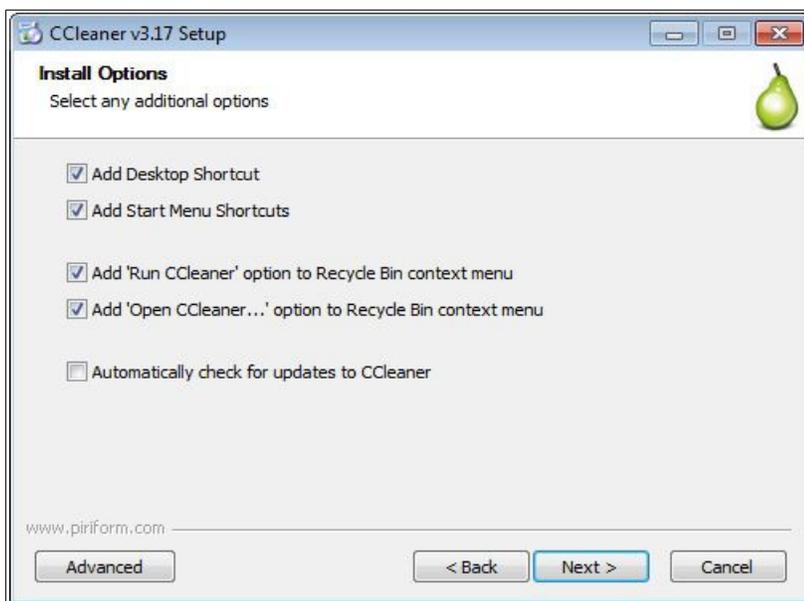
Okay so the first thing you want to do is to clean your computer. Get rid of all the old crap software and expired free-trial software that you no longer use and really don't need.

To do this I recommend getting hold of a program called **CCleaner**. This software will allow you to uninstall software you don't need, clean out all your temporary files that are taking up space, and monitor your start up list.

Most software that gets installed adds a little shortcut to the start up list. These shortcuts allow software to quick start or to check for updates every day. The problem is every time your computer starts you end up with all these little programs and updates running which seriously slows everything down.

So go get the **CCleaner** software from here – <http://www.piriform.com/CCLEANER>

Note: At this point download the FREE version – you don't need the others. However in the future if you want to support the software authors feel free to get the paid version. FYI I still use the free version and have never needed the options available in the paid version.



Note During Install:

Install the software and when it gets to *Install Options* I keep them all ticked except the “*check for updates*” option. The “add to recycle bin” options are also especially good. These allow you to run CCleaner at any time by just right-clicking on your recycle bin which is a great shortcut.



Also you can un-tick the options to add the Google Chrome web browser. Unless of course you want the browser.

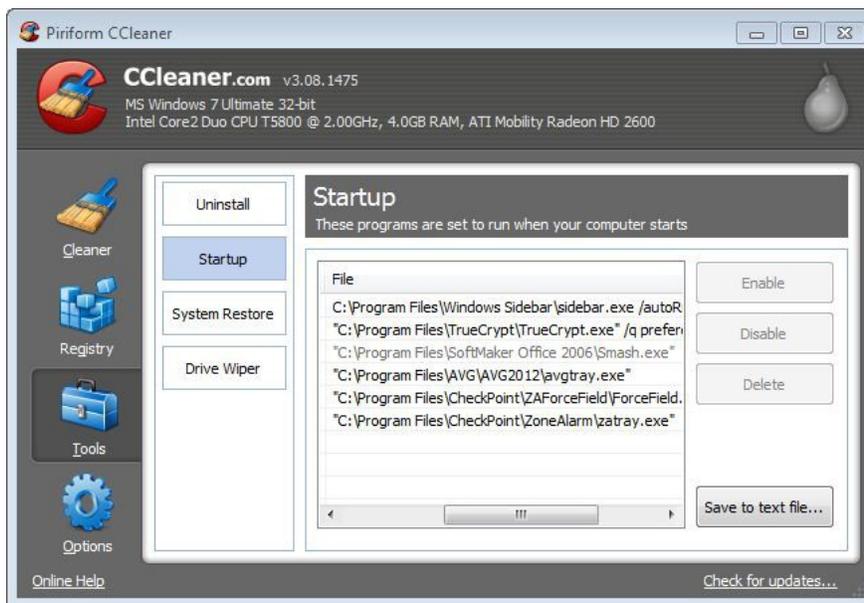
After installation run the software and go to the **Tools** bar. Here you can see a list of all software that has been installed on your computer.



Go through and uninstall everything you dont need and anything that annoys you with popups.

Then reboot your computer to finish

After the reboot open CCleaner again, go to **Tools** and then **Startup**.



In the startup window you will see a list of all the software that automatically opens when you boot up your computer.

Some of these items are quite important (such as anti-virus software) but all the rest can be disabled.

In this example here line 3 has my office software listed. I don't need this to start every time I boot up so I can happily disable this one.

Note: we just disable for now instead of hitting delete. That way if you find anything that doesn't work anymore, (like your printer for example), then you can come back in and un-disable it.

Once you have disabled all the extra software that you don't need you will find that on your next reboot your computer will start up much faster.

This Ccleaner software does a lot more other than getting rid of old software. It's primary purpose is to clean your computer of old files, clear your browser cache and actually get rid of any any old files that might compromise your security if your computer was hacked. You can even securely over-write sensitive data with encryption technology that is so good it's banned in some countries! Take a while to explore it and find out what it will do.

I personally have it set up so every time I empty my recycle bin this software securely over-writes it.

Okay so moving along. Next we are going to look at installing some new anti-virus and firewall software. But before we move along now would be a good time to look and see if your old anti-virus and firewall software is out of date? Does it annoy you with pop-ups telling you to renew? If so, before moving on you can delete all the old anti-virus and firewall software on your computer using the Ccleaner.

After uninstalling the anti-virus and firewall software do a final reboot and then move onto the next stage.

Free (But 100% Effective) Anti-virus Software

People think free means poor quality. But strangely with anti-virus software the best stuff actually is free.

So how do the software companies make any money? By selling add-ons. Here's how it works.

The anti-virus companies add firewalls to their software. They want you to download free anti-virus software and hope that you upgrade to get the version that includes the firewall.

But the great thing is the Firewall companies do exactly the same. They create free firewall software and hope that you upgrade to their paid version to get the add-on anti-virus. So instead of paying for just one program to do everything we take the free version of the anti-virus and the free firewall and end up with 2 excellent and very free pieces of software. 100% top quality software absolutely free. Dont you just love that?

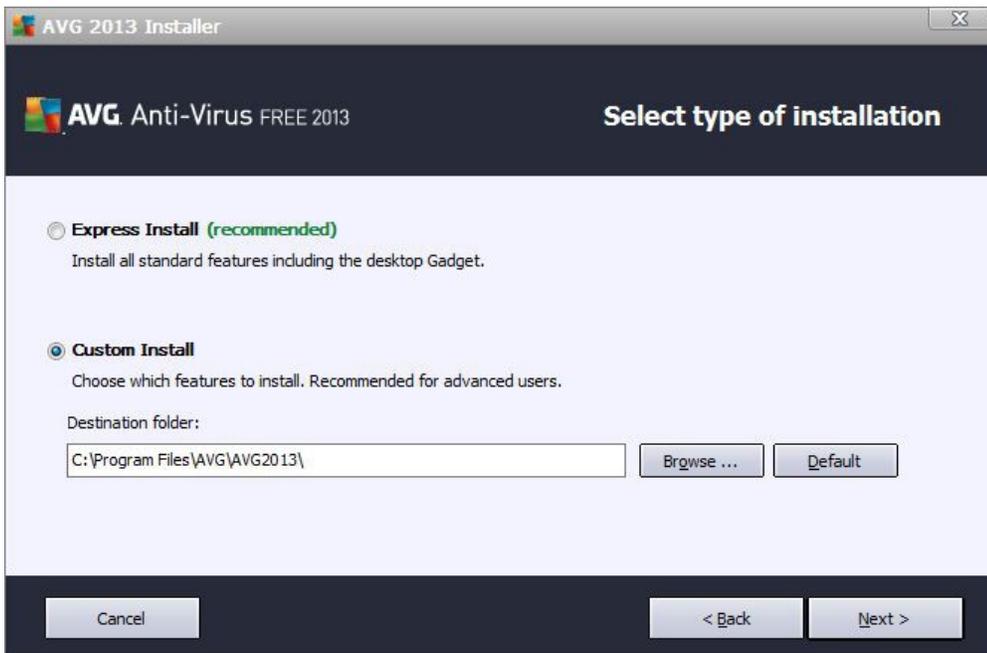
The best free anti-virus software I can recommend is one I have been using personally for the last 10 years. It's on all my computers and has never let me down once. It's the AVG-Free Anti-Virus.

Go download it from here – [CNET – AVG Free](#). Make sure you click on the FREE edition. This will download an installer to your computer. Run it and it will download/ install software.

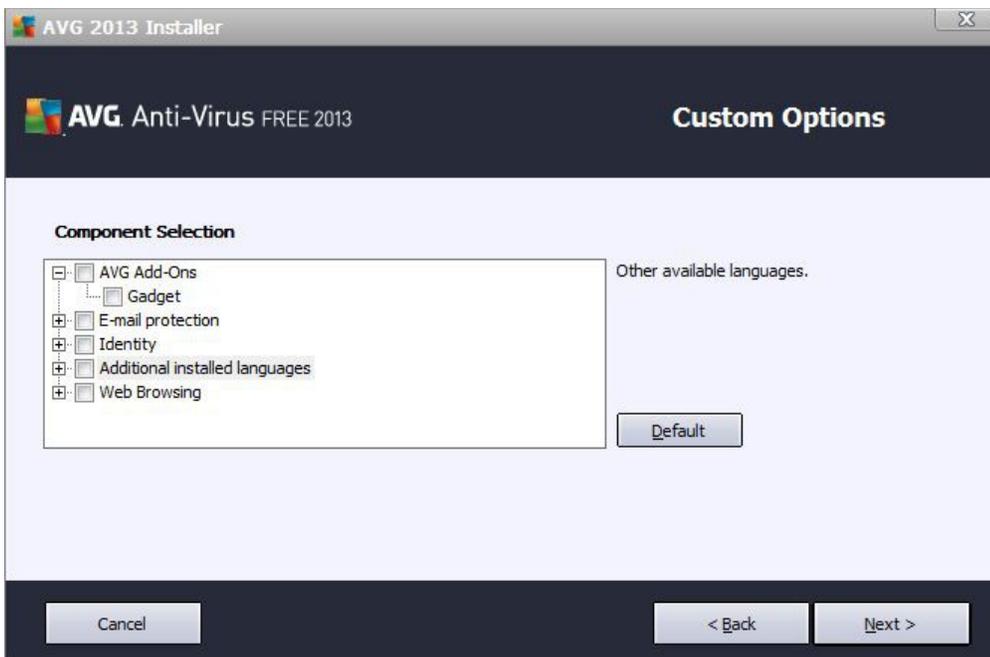


During installation it will try to get you to install a full trial. If you do this it will start nagging you after 30 days. So don't bother.

I recommend just clicking on the Free Basic Protection.

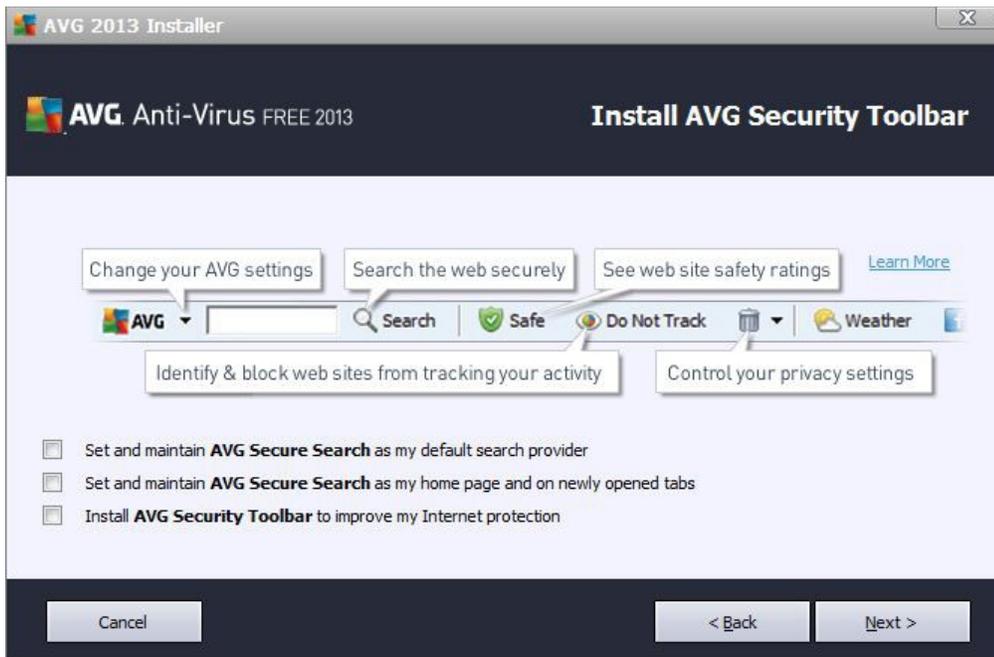


WARNING – During installation choose **Custom Install**. Otherwise you will find the software installs some free extras that, whilst useful, are more annoying than anything.



I would then un-tick all the optional extras.

(Note: This is my personal preference but I find it keeps my computers running fast having less stuff going on in the background.)



The software then asks you to install the AVG toolbar.

Again you don't need to install this as it just (in my opinion) adds crap to your web browser.

So during install untick all 3 of the option boxes and then click next. It will then continue to download the rest of the software and install it.

This software will also add items to our startup list. This is ok because you need to have the anti-virus software running in the background. So we don't mind if it loads up when we start our computers.

Once installed you can let it download any updates and then let it do a check of your computer. This may take a while but now you know you are safe and up to date.

Free (But 100% Effective) Firewall Software

So now we have our anti-virus sorted we also need a firewall and just like with the anti-virus software we can download a free version without needing to upgrade to the premium paid version.

So, the Firewall I recommend, and have been using for a very long time is ZoneAlarm from Zonelabs.

Its very simple to use, will auto-configure itself on install and if software on your computer tries to “phone home” without you asking, then the firewall will popup a little box asking you if that’s okay or not. You then say either “yes” or “no” and the firewall will remember the answer for next time.

The software will also stop hackers from “pinging” your computer and trying to gain un-authorised access.

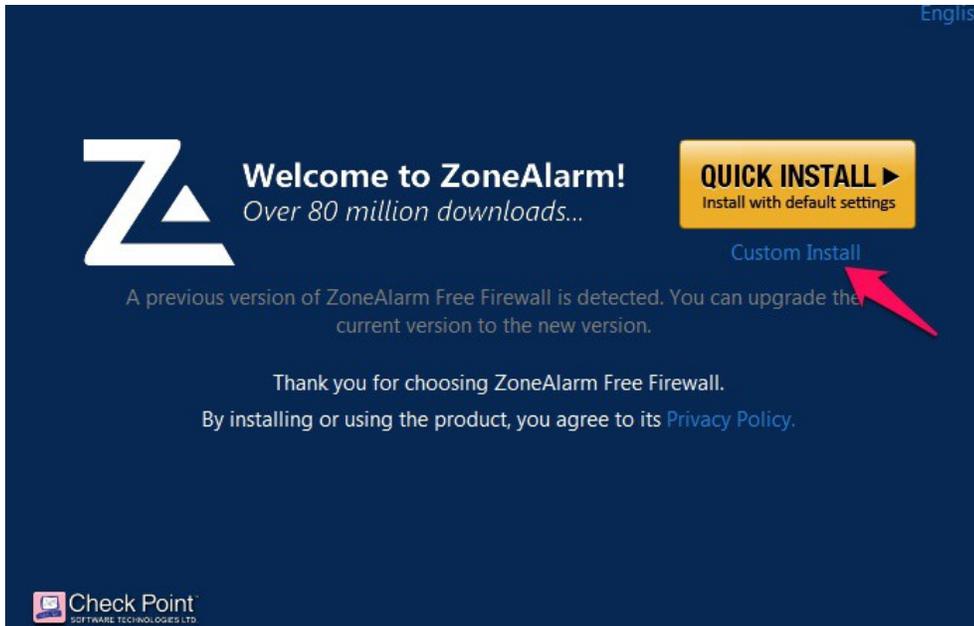
So go here to download the [ZoneAlarm Free Firewall](#).



The screenshot shows the ZoneAlarm website interface. At the top, it says "ZONEALARM by Check Point SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGIES LTD." with a shopping cart icon and a "MY ACCOUNT" button. Below the navigation bar, there are two main options: "ZoneAlarm® Free Firewall" and "Get ZoneAlarm® Internet Security Suite". The "Free Firewall" option is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow pointing to a download icon. The "Internet Security Suite" option features a product image and a form to "ENTER YOUR DETAILS" with fields for First Name, Last Name, and E-mail, and a "Get It Free" button. A yellow banner in the top right corner of the suite section says "FREE". Below these options is a section titled "WHY UPGRADE?" and a link for "ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite".

NOTE: Download just the free firewall. If you download the Internet Security Suite, it will install a trial version of the full software which you will eventually have to pay for.

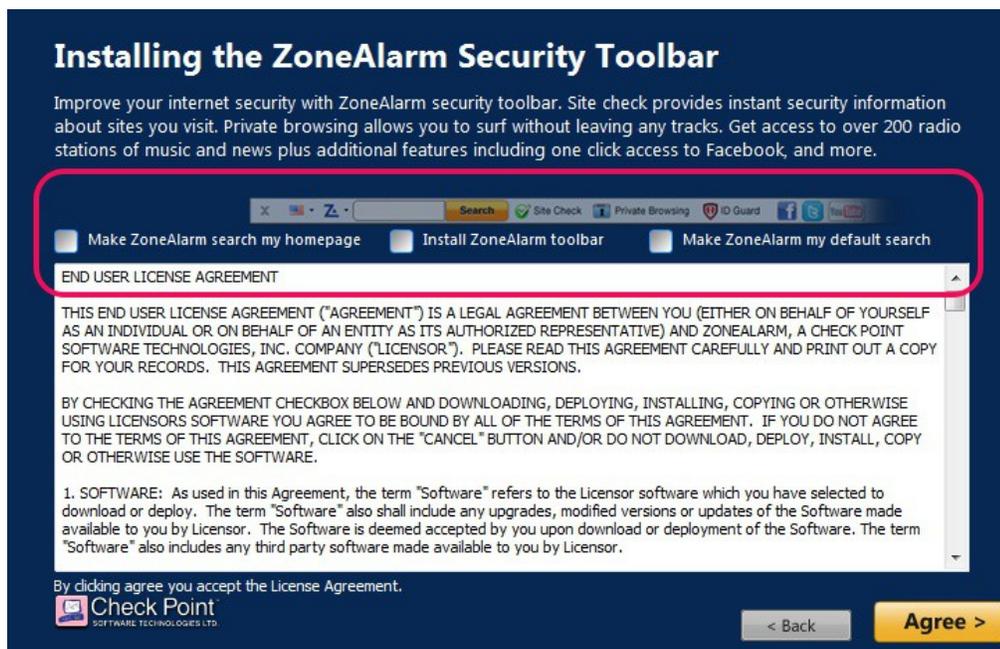
Either that or you'll have to un-install to stop the nagging!



On the next screen click on the “Custom Install”

This will allow you to choose what extras you want the software to install.

(By the way when installing ANY software always click on the custom install so you always get the chance to veto any add-ons you don't need).



And now on the next screen it wants to hijack your browser's search and home page and install a toolbar.

See why custom installs are so important?

Untick the 3 boxes and click Agree to continue.

Finally during the install it may ask for you to enter your name and email and register. **You do not need to register for it to work.** Untick everything and just continue with the installation. Finish the install, reboot and run. And relax. You are now safe!

By the way, this will also add some items to our startup list but again these are fine so leave them there.

Browse Safe - Part 1

One of the best ways to stay safe when surfing the net is to make sure you always have a fully up-to-date web browser.

If you are still using the old standard Internet Explorer that came with your computer 5 years ago then you could be in big trouble as this is easy to hack. Internet Explorer also gets laden down with various toolbars which tends to make it (and your computer) slow.

So what's so wrong with Internet Explorer?

Well here's the problem: Hackers tend to create malicious software (viruses etc) specifically targeted at big corporations. And they know that most big corporations tend to stick with the standard Internet Explorer that came with their Windows licenses. So virus writers know that if they want to hit big corporations then its Internet Explorer that they need to attack.

This makes anyone using IE (especially older versions) vulnerable to online scams, attacks and viruses.

At the very least If you like Internet Explorer and want to stick with it then feel free to do so. But you should upgrade to the latest version. However now there is an extra problem. If you want the very latest version you will also have to upgrade your operating system to the Windows 7 or above. That's a sneaky trick from Microsoft.

Luckily there are now much better, faster and more secure browsers available and they are all free. Choose one from the list below (My favourite is Firefox but the others are good too) -

Top Free (and safe) browsers -

Firefox – [Download here](#)

Google Chrome – [Download here](#)

Opera – [Download here](#)

Browse Safe - Part 2

I use Firefox. It's my favourite browser. And one of the reasons I like it is because I have found some great add-ons that protect your privacy whilst browsing online -

Do Not Track Plus – This is a free add-on that stops marketing companies from tracking your browsing. You can get it free [here](#). This is free because they are hoping you will buy their other add-ons. The others look good but I haven't tested them so I can't comment.

Add Block Plus – This is one of my favourite add-ons. It block all the ads on sites so that you can have a nice ad-free browsing experience. It runs in the background and you never even know its there. Until you try browsing on another computer and you see all those crazy flashing ads. This might also stop your staff or kids from getting distracted from their homework/work research too. [Get it here](#).

Flash Block – On many sites adverts are served as Flash graphics or movies, and on many sites when you visit a Flash movie will start playing. This is not only annoying but slows down your page loading times and uses up bandwidth. Flash Block blocks the flash and replaces it with a button. If you want to see the missing flash you can click. Its a great feature. [Get it here](#).

If you have a browser other than Firefox then you may still be able to get these add-ons as most software companies now create products for all browsers. Just do a Google search.

Happy Browsing!

Backup Your Computer

You can make your computer as safe as possible. You can download all the security software in the world, run the best browsers and clean out all the crap.

But that wont stop someone spilling coffee over it. It also wont stop floods, tidal waves, tornados, hurricanes and burglars.

The hard drive is also very likely to just fail! Dont think this wont happen to you!

In the last 3 years I have had 5 hard drives fail on me! In my possession right now I have 2 laptops that are useless (unless I want to go buy new drives). And in the last 2 years alone I have had 3 people come to me with dead computers/hard drives asking me to try and retrieve valuable photos and files from failed hard drives.

In some cases I have been successful but its not always easy to do. If the drive is failing I can try and recover the data. Sometimes the drive will stay alive for 5 minutes or so. Long enough to recover some stuff bit by bit. Other times the drives wont even spin up. They're dead!

So what's the solution?

The recommendation used to be backup onto a spare drive. This is still good practise. However it wont stop burglars or floods or fire. So even if you have a backup hard drive you really still need to backup your computers **offsite**.

And actually this is so important that it's the only piece of security that I recommend paying for.

With offsite backups you download software to your computer and the service automatically encrypts and uploads all the files and folders you want to a safe offsite location.

You can even use it to synch up multiple computers. Then if the worst happens you simply buy a new computer – reinstall the online backup software and once again download your files.

If all your business information is on your computer this could literally save your business. And this is especially important for photographers. Imagine shooting a wedding and then spending hours creating an album. And then bam! All gone in an instant!

There are lots of different companies out there but the only one I have experience with that I can recommend is [JustCloud](#).

And the great thing is they have a free trial. Try it out and see what you think! Click on the banner below to start the trial. And yes, it does take a little bit of time to set up but once it's up and running it makes backing up your computer simple. The peace of mind is definitely worth it.



The banner features a laptop on the left with a film strip and a photo being inserted into it. To the right of the laptop, the text reads "Unlimited Cloud Storage" in a large blue font, with "Simple, Safe & Secure" in a smaller black font below it. On the far right, there is a yellow button with the text "Try it, It's FREE!" in black.

Well that's all for now. I hope all the above helps you enjoy safe and secure computing.

If you have found this book useful and know anyone else who may need some help with computer security then please pass it on. It's 100% free!

Thanks again. Max Davies

<http://www.thealbumstudio.com> – Professional Templates and Training for Photographers.



The banner has a dark background. On the left, the text "Album Design Made Easy!" is written in a large, bold, white font. In the center, there are several overlapping images of different album design templates. On the right, the text "Over 10,000 Design Options!" is written in a smaller white font, and below it is a yellow button with the text "Find Out More!" in black.