Will two antivirus programs increase my security?
By John Allen

Only one Primary Antivirus
It is important to have only one primary antivirus product installed on your computer. Examples of primary antivirus products are *Microsoft Security Essentials*, *AVG, Avast, Avira, Norton Internet Security, Kaspersky, McAfee, Trend-Micro*.

Having multiple primary antivirus products installed is not beneficial, and can cause serious conflicts resulting in intermittent system failures, file access problems, performance slow down, freezing, and devices not operating correctly. These conflicts can occur even if one antivirus is dormant. In a recent case we looked at, a Wireless LAN failure was most likely due to having both *Avast* and *Norton* installed.

Surprisingly, even after uninstalling one of these products, 'footprints' can remain on your system and cause problems when a different antivirus is installed. If you are installing a different antivirus, the following procedure is suggested:

1. Download the new antivirus (or have the product disk ready) so it is ready to install, but don't install it yet
2. Download the specific removal tool for your old antivirus (if available) but don't run it yet – see a list of these tools here - http://tinyurl.com/4mpehke
3. Remove the existing antivirus using *Add or Remove programs* in *Control Panel*
4. Restart the computer
5. Run the specific removal tool above to clean up the 'footprints'
6. Restart the computer
7. Install your new antivirus the restart your computer
8. You should receive a warning message if Windows detects that there is no active Firewall. You can check the Windows Firewall status as follows: in Windows 8 - search *Settings* for "Firewall"; Windows 7 – Control Panel/*Action Center/Security;* Vista – *Control Panel/Security Centre;* XP – *Control Panel/Windows Firewall.*

Which is the best primary antivirus?
This is the subject of never-ending debates. All the well-known products are battling to keep up with the virus writers, and they are all continually enhancing the detection and removal methodology of their programs. One day one might be the 'best', the next day another one might be. Any of them can fail to detect a recent virus or variant. All the major free products offer simple, effective protection.

Firewalls
A *software firewall* must be on all the time to protect your computer from direct attacks that might occur even if you are not using email or browsing. Many of the paid antivirus suites come with their own firewall, however, the inbuilt *Windows firewall* provides excellent protection against incoming attacks. For added protection, most routers include a *hardware firewall*. If you have a router or home network gateway, the router manual should explain how to check if this is on. Having one software firewall and a hardware firewall concurrently active increases protection.

Pre-installed Antivirus on a new computer

Most computers come preinstalled with an antivirus with limited free subscription. If you do not intend to use the pre-installed one, it is better not to activate it. Carry out the uninstall procedures mentioned above then install your favourite antivirus.

Note that *Windows 8* comes with *Microsoft Defender* (a rebadged version of *Microsoft Security Essentials*) pre-loaded. If a different antivirus is installed, Windows automatically disables Defender.

Adding a secondary anti-malware scanner

Having a primary antivirus alone is sufficient, providing that *Windows, Flash player Acrobat Reader, Firefox, Quicktime, Skype*, etc. are kept up to date with security patches, and care is taken with emails and browsing the web.

However, you can add a secondary anti-malware scanner, for example, *Malwarebytes* or *SuperAntispyware*. The free non-trial versions of these products are just scanners, they offer no real-time protection and will not stop your computer being infected. However, you can use them to do regular scans to check that your system contains no malware. The free versions are unlikely to cause conflicts with your primary antivirus. You *can* use the "Pro"versions of these secondary scanners to increase real-time protection as they are designed to operate with a primary antivirus, but you need to check with the companies concerned regarding settings to avoid conflicts with your primary antivirus. I personally use *Microsoft Security Essentials* and *Malwarebytes Pro* on my Windows 7 computers and *Windows Defender* with *Malwarebytes Pro* on Windows 8, with appropriate exclusion settings to avoid conflicts.

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