



Free Software For Your Computer.

Office Suite – Although Microsoft’s Office suite is the industry standard, it is however expensive. You can buy the [Home and Student edition](#) for around \$100 to \$125 but there are free alternatives, [LibreOffice](#) for Win or Mac that can open documents created by Word, Excel, and PowerPoint and it can also create documents in those formats or the smaller but still potent [KingSoft Office](#) for Win or Android. If you have a Gmail account you already have a free office suite and it’s called [Google Docs](#) and you have 5GB of free storage with [Google Drive](#) or if you have a Microsoft Hotmail or Outlook.com email account then you have access to [Microsoft's free web office](#).

AntiVirus – You need just one good antivirus program on your computer and it must be kept up to date. Norton and McAfee are the 2 biggest commercial offerings but there are free alternatives. [Microsoft’s Security Essentials Suite](#), [Avira AntiVir Personal Free](#), and [Avast Free](#) are currently three of the best rated and [AVG](#) remains popular. ([more on antivirus here](#)) [Macs need anti-virus too](#) and it’s free from [Sophos](#) and [Avast](#).

If you already have a good antivirus program and your computer got infected anyway, try cleaning it with [Malwarebytes](#). It won’t protect your computer but it will remove all kinds of bad stuff.

Web Browsers – Consider using [FireFox](#) or better still, [Google Chrome](#) rather than Internet Explorer or Safari. Also, install the [Web Of Trust](#) for safer web searches.

Stay in touch – If you like instant messaging, [Pidgin](#) is a single program that will work with all the popular IM programs like; AIM, MSN, Yahoo, and more. [Skype](#) is a program that lets you talk to your family and friends for free right from your computer and if you have a webcam you can see each other too. There’s even a “Skype Out” plan that gives you unlimited calling to telephones in the US and Canada for \$3/month, [even from your cell-phone](#). [Gmail](#) now lets you call phones in the US and Canada from your computer for free.

Don’t forget – [EssentialPIM Free](#) helps you keep track of your contacts, tasks, and schedule with built in calendar and appointment scheduling. A [Gmail account](#) also includes an excellent calendar

Personal Finance – Keep track of your money and pay bills on time with [Ace Money Light](#), [Money Manager EX](#) or [Mint](#).

Graphics & Pictures – Two of the better lightweight graphics and picture editors are [IrfanView](#) and [Fotografix](#). For a full, layer-capable editor try the on-line program [Phoenix](#) or the downloadable program [StylePix](#).

Adobe Reader – You’ll need it to read PDF documents from the internet and our online courses and while you’re at [Adobe’s site](#) you can get the latest Flash Player too. Better lightweight substitutes for Adobe Reader are available like [FoxIt Reader](#) and [Nitro Reader](#). Whatever reader you use, be sure to keep it up to date.

Honorable Mentions - [Scribus](#) and [SpringPublisher](#) are desktop publishers similar to QuarkXpress or Adobe InDesign. Also, [InkScape](#) the vector graphics editor similar to Adobe Illustrator® or Corel Draw. [Avidemux](#) is a simple yet powerful video editing program.

Don't forget to regularly backup your documents, pictures, etc. [That can be done to an external hard drive, DVD-r media, or to the internet.](#) There are many cloud-based services such as [Microsoft's Sky Drive](#), [Google Drive](#), [Amazon Cloud Drive](#) etc., but [ADrive gives you 50GB free space in their personal plan](#) and that's 10 times as much storage space as the others.

Macs – [Here is a link](#) to an article on the best free downloads for Macs.

Online Applications and Services – Many of the tasks you would normally install software for can be done over the internet or “in the Cloud” as they say. This is a newer approach and the software you will be using is already installed in the website, so nothing needs to be installed on your computer. You will be surprised at the variety available as most of the previously mentioned software is unnecessary. Find out more about it in this [Gizmo's Best Free Online Applications and Services](#).

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