An Update to Anti-virus Software Evaluation, for 2014 Products
(first pass, April 1, 2014 – no fooling, however)

Compiled by Gary Patrick
Lexington Senior Center Computer & Technology Club
Lexington, Massachusetts

In view that many people are upgrading or replacing personal computers because of the obsolescence of Microsoft Windows XP, I thought it would be appropriate to provide some information that is newer than my Antivirus Test Results Report in March 2013.

1) Latest Test Results and Ranking from Consumer Reports (today)
2) Latest Reactive & Proactive Test Graph from Virus Bulletin
3) A Ranking of Free Antivirus Programs considering user opinion and lab test results, Feb. 2013 (found on Windows Secrets Newsletter Forum)

Brand & Model	Price	Overall score	Threat blocking	Ease of use	Malware scan	Resource drain	Firewall	Updating	Anti-phishing	Response to threats
Free anti-malware programs		0 (P F G VG) 100								
☑ **Avast!** Free Antivirus	---	57	◐	○	○	◐	○	○	◑	◑
☑ **Avira** Free Antivirus	---	53	○	◐	○	◐	○	○	●	◉
AVG AntiVirus Free 2014	---	51	○	○	○	◐	○	○	●	◉
Microsoft Security Essentials	---	38	◑	○	●	○	○	◑	●	◉
Security suites		0 (P F G VG) 100								
☑ **ESET** Smart Security	$80	65	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	◐	○	◑
☑ **G Data** InternetSecurity 2014	$65	64	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	◑	◉
☑ **F-Secure** Internet Security 2014	$60	60	○	○	○	◐	◐	○	◑	◐
☑ **Kaspersky** Internet Security 2014	$80	59	◐	○	○	○	○	◐	○	◉
☑ **BitDefender** Internet Security	$70	59	◐	○	○	○	○	◐	◐	◉
☑ **Avira** Internet Security Suite 2014	$101	59	◐	◐	○	◐	○	○	●	◉
Avast! Internet Security 2014	$60	56	◐	◐	○	◐	○	○	◑	◑
BullGuard Internet Security 2014	$60	55	○	○	○	○	◉	○	◑	◉
Trend Micro Titanium Internet Security 2014	$80	54	◐	○	○	◐	○	●	◐	◉
AVG Internet Security 2014	$70	53	○	◐	○	◐	○	○	●	◉
McAfee Internet Security 2014	$80	52	◐	○	◐	○	○	●	◐	○
Norton Internet Security	$80	50	◐	○	○	◐	○	●	◑	◉
Microsoft Windows 8	$120	47	◑	○	●	◉	○	◑	●	◉
Panda Internet Security 2014	$70	42	◑	○	○	○	○	●	●	○

Consumer Reports Online, Comments about Recommended AntiVirus programs.   4/01/2014

Avast! Free AV: Score 57; (of 100) The best of the free anti-malware programs, Avast!is very good at protecting against live threats from websites. It also reacts quickly when discovering new viruses. There's no way to create a bootable CD or USB online if your computer won't start. This product was better at detecting malware on a USB drive when online, indicating its reliance on Internet access for best malware detection. Lacks Informative Help, and lacks startup repair. www.avast.com

Avira Free AV: Score: 53;   Avira's free version was sufficient at protecting against live threats from websites and detecting new malware, but poor at blocking phishing attempts. You can create a bootable CD or USB online if your computer won't start up. Avira offers a full suite for $101.   www.avira.com

AVG's free version was sufficient at protecting against live threats from websites and detecting new malware, but poor at blocking phishing attempts. You can create a bootable CD or USB online if your computer won't start up. When you use this product, AVG Secure Search becomes your default search engine. While it uses Google search technology, results are displayed differently, with many ads appearing at the top of the result list.

ESET Smart Security: Score: 65: $80.   The top-rated pay suite did well protecting against live threats from websites and new malware. There are several extra features, including a spam filter and parental controls. You can create a bootable CD or USB from within the program, although the process to do so was confusing. In addition, there's no way to create one online if your computer won't start.   Lacks startup   repair.   www.eset.com

GData Internet Security 2014:   Score 64; $65   This software did well protecting against live threats from websites. It was also quick to protect against new malware, and it includes extra features like a spam filter and parental controls. You can create a bootable CD or USB online if your computer fails to start. Protection against phishing was not among the best. It doesn't show pop-ups when there's a problem with malware protection.   www.gdatasoftware.com

Explanation of Scoring Ingredients:
Overall score: Based on performance detecting and blocking online and offline threats, ease of use, and effective response to newly-discovered malware.
Threat blocking: shows how well the product protected against live exploits from websites and local drives.
Malware scan: measures effectiveness scanning the PC for malware, both online and offline.
Resource drain measures use of memory and tendency to slow computer operation during a scan.
Firewall shows how well the software and its firewall stopped rogue connections to and from the Internet.
Updating shows how soon the product was able to protect against new malware.
Anti-phishing measures the ability to block websites known to host malware.
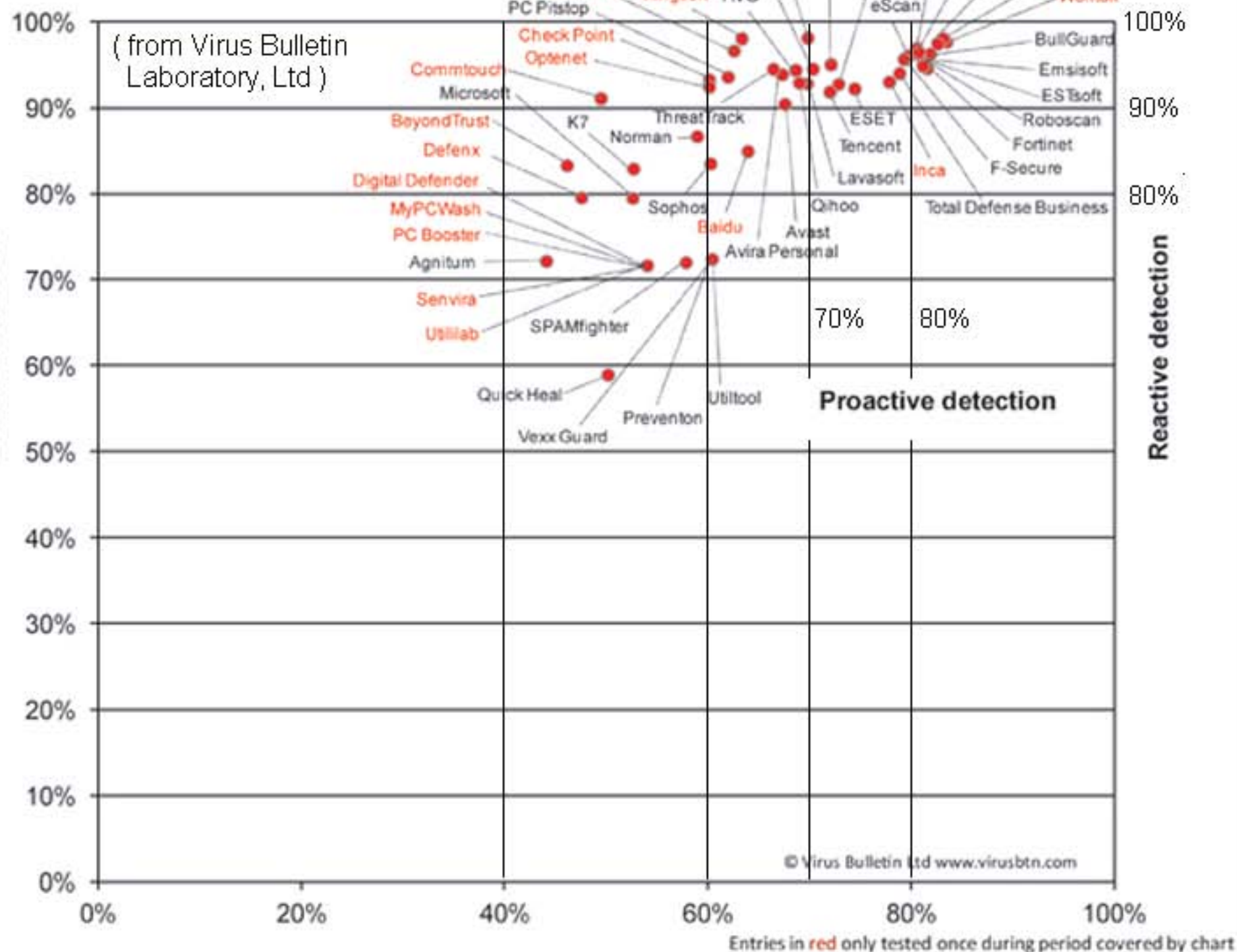Response to threats indicates appropriateness of the suggested or default response to a detected threat.

Startup repair provides a way to recover when malware stops your PC from booting, even if you haven't created a repair disc with the software.

RAP averages quadrant Aug 2013 - Feb 2014
(Reactive and Proactive Test Protocol)

(from Virus Bulletin
Laboratory, Ltd)

Reactive detection (vertical axis, left): 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, 100%

Proactive detection (horizontal axis): 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%

Labels: Kromtech, Kaspersky, Ikarus, Avira Pro, Bitdefender, G Data, TrustPort, MSecure, Kingsoft, AVG, Hauri, Wontok, PC Pitstop, eScan, Check Point, BullGuard, Optenet, Emsisoft, Commtouch, ESTsoft, Microsoft, Threat Track, ESET, Roboscan, BeyondTrust, K7, Norman, Tencent, Fortinet, Defenx, Lavasoft, Inca, F-Secure, Digital Defender, Sophos, Qihoo, Total Defense Business, MyPCWash, Baidu, PC Booster, Avast, Agnitum, Avira Personal, Senvira, Utililab, SPAMfighter, Quick Heal, Utiltool, Preventon, Vexx Guard

70%, 80% (quadrant markers)

Proactive detection

© Virus Bulletin Ltd www.virusbtn.com

Entries in red only tested once during period covered by chart

In the compilation of this chart, any RAP score achieved in a test in which the product in question generated one or more false positives is NOT counted towards that product's average score. Products that entered only one of the comparatives used to generate the chart (or for which only one set of results are counted due to false positives in other tests) are marked in RED - this indicates that the score may be considered less reliable an indicator of detection capability than those for whom an average of measures across several tests are available.

www.virusbtn.com/vb100/RAP/RAP-quadrant-Aug13-Feb14-1200.jpg

Ranking and Reviews of Free Antivirus/Antimalware Software, by CloudsandSkye, Windows Secrets Forum Member,   2/01/2013, in Windows Secrets Lounge.   [Saved 2/16/2014, & comments 4/01/2014]

Now is a year old, but useful still because it weights user opinion highly in determining the ranking.
(No update of this has been posted to Windows Secrets, as of this time.)
http://windowssecrets.com/forums/showthread.php/151966-Ranking-and-reviews-of-free-antivirus-antimalware-software.

Foreword by CloudsandSkye: "Updated from my previous list a year ago (2/2012), this list of free antivirus/
antimalware software is ranked by highest to lowest user scores from various websites that compile those scores, such as cnet, softpedia, etc. Such a ranking is based on usability, since most users don't have a way to properly test antimalware technical capability, and thus the reason for the editorial comments. The sample size for the compiled scores ranges from hundreds of users to tens of thousands. Editorial comments are from lab testing by PC Magazine, PC Advisor, PCWorld, etc. User scores and editorial comments were, for the most part, from the past year. All have automatic updates and real-time protection, unless otherwise stated. Blocking refers to real-time protection; detection and removal refers to cleaning an infected computer."

(A few paid Antivirus programs made the list (Norton and McAfee, for example) because they are offered free by some internet service providers.)

1. **avast! Free Antivirus 7** (http://www.avast.com/free-antivirus-download): Average malware blocking. Above average detection and removal. Has automatic sandboxing.   [additional comments in Forum after article, by bobprimak, 2/21/2013: "I have the new update for Avast 7 under Windows 8 and Windows 7, and it has a simpler user interface than before. But the expert controls are all still in there, if you learn where they are and how to dig them out. Overall, the new version is an improvement from an end-user perspective." Further, he says "I use MSE-4 under Windows XP because Avast in the past year completely locked up Windows XP (Pro, SP3 32-bit) twice;" and CloudsandSkye responded: "I use the same operating system and had a similar experience. What I discovered was that when the computer is disconnected from the internet it will almost cease to function because the Cloud Services of Avast! begins to consume enormous resources trying to find an internet connection. I didn't feel the Cloud Services was important for me, so I turned it off, and from that point on Avast! has been flawless." bobprimak: "I am running MSE-4 alongside Avast in Win 7 Home Premium 64-bit without significant conflicts. In Win 8 Pro, when Avast was installed, Microsoft's Windows Defender went dormant, which it is supposed to do."

2. **Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free 1.70** (http://www.malwarebytes.org/products/malwarebytes_free): Below average malware detection, but above average removal. Detection and removal of rootkits below average. Some rootkits still running after alleged removal. Very fast scan. Manual definition file updates. No real-time protection.
[Fred Langa uses this and #3 on his own p.c's]

3. **Microsoft Security Essentials 4.0** (http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/w...tials-download): Average malware blocking. Below average detection and removal. Left some malware installed after alleged removal. Scan is very slow.
[Fred Langa uses this and #3 on his own p.c's] [MSE-4 has lost certification from AV-Test Labs.]

4. **Avira Free Antivirus 2013** (http://www.avira.com/en/avira-free-antivirus): Above average malware blocking and removal. Below average detection.   [was not compatible with Windows 8 as of February 2013]

5. **Spybot – Search & Destroy 2.0** (http://www.safer-networking.org): Below average detection and removal of malware. Particularly poor removal of rootkits. User interface has many extremely awkward elements. Almost 100% ineffective. Manual definition file updates. No real-time protection.

6. **SpywareBlaster 4.6** (http://www.brightfort.com): Above average spyware blocking. No spyware detection or removal capability. May occasionally block access to legitimate websites. Manual definition file updates. Intended as a complement to existing antivirus software, not as a replacement.

7. **AVG Anti-Virus Free 2013** (http://free.avg.com/us-en/homepage): Above average malware blocking, detection, and removal. Some detected malware had to be removed manually.

8. **Comodo Antivirus 2012** (http://www.comodo.com): Above average malware blocking. Below average detection and removal. Removal of rootkits particularly poor. Has sandbox and secure DNS features. Many complex popups.
[Comodo failed to be certified by either Virus Bulletin or AV-TEST, mentioned in a follow-on forum comment]

9. **Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool**
(http://www.microsoft.com/security/pc...e-removal.aspx): Included in the monthly Microsoft Update download. Checks for specific, prevalent malware and helps remove any found. Intended as a complement to existing antivirus software, not as a replacement.

10. **ClamWin Free Antivirus** (http://www.clamwin.com): Below average malware detection and removal. Scan is slow. Open-source antivirus software. No real-time protection.

11. **SUPERAntiSpyware 5.6** (http://www.superantispyware.com): Below average malware detection and removal. Particularly poor detection of rootkits. Left some malware installed after alleged removal. Repairs security settings changed by malware. Fast scan. Manual definition file updates. No real-time protection.

12. **Agnitum Outpost Security Suite Free 7.1** (http://free.agnitum.com/): Below average malware blocking. Above average detection and removal.

13. **Norton Antivirus 2013** (http://us.norton.com/antivirus/): Available for free from some internet service providers. Average malware blocking. Above average detection and removal. Many extra features and tools.

14. **Panda Cloud Antivirus Free Edition 2.0** (http://www.cloudantivirus.com/en/forHome/): Below average malware blocking. Above average detection, but below average removal. Minimal system impact. Works poorly when disconnected from the internet.

15. **Immunet Free Antivirus 3.0** (http://www.immunet.com/free/index.html): Below average malware blocking, detection, and removal. Failed rootkit removal test. Cloud-based protection. Fast scan. Intended as a complement to existing antivirus software, not as a replacement.

16. **Ad-Aware Free Antivirus+ 10** (http://www.lavasoft.com/products/ad_aware_free.php): Above average malware blocking, detection, and removal. Low resource usage. Some performance glitches. Malware removal left one test computer unusable.

<[Rank Position that would be true for a reader-inquiry product, **Unthreat Antivirus**, but for insufficient participation in controlled testing with a defined database of malware. Unthreat is from a relatively new company, licensing the Vipre antivirus engine and repackaging it into their own proprietary product. Testing of the Vipre product shows it to have above average malware blocking, average malware detection, and below average malware removal. The inquirer says it is easy to use.]

17. **ZoneAlarm Free Antivirus+Firewall 110** (http://www.zonealarm.com/security/en...s-firewall.htm): Above average malware blocking. Below average detection and removal. Increases boot time.

18. **PC Tools Antivirus Free 2012** (http://www.pctools.com/free-antivirus/index/d/2): Below average

malware blocking. Above average detection and removal. Easy to use. Relentless pushing of paid version.

19. **McAfee Internet Security 2013** (http://home.mcafee.com/store/internet-security): Available for free from some internet service providers. Average malware blocking, detection, and removal. Many extra features.

20. **McAfee Antivirus Plus 2013** (http://home.mcafee.com/store/antivirus-plus): Available for free from some internet service providers. Average malware blocking, detection, and removal. Several extra features.

Some internet service providers offering free antivirus/antimalware software include AOL, AT&T, CenturyLink, Charter Communications, Comcast, Cox Communications, EarthLink, Optimum/Cablevision, and Time Warner Cable.

CloudsandSkye commenting: "I tested some of these antivirus software products for usability on my own computer, although that experience is not reflected in the ranking or comments above. Since these products are constantly changing, it's not really worth mentioning some of the foibles unique to each product. But, I did find a few things that seemed to occur across more than a few products:

1.) Antispyware – All major antivirus products have included antispyware for several years, so separate antispyware has become obsolete. In fact, it's rare to see any professional testing of these products anymore since they are redundant with current antivirus software. A few publishers of antispyware still exist, but unless they convert to a complete antivirus product like some of their competitors did over the last several years, their future is dim.

2.) Password Protection – There is malware out there that can turn off your antivirus software faster than it can react to the presence of the malware, leaving your computer defenseless. Some antivirus software does not have password protection to prevent this, which is a security flaw. If the software you are using lacks password protection, replace it with another product that does.

3.) E-Mail Scanning - If you POP your e-mail, setting that up for scanning with some of these antivirus products can be difficult, and may even create problems that include a security breach. After doing some research on this and thinking about it, I've come to the conclusion that e-mail scanning may not be necessary for everyone, and adds an extra layer of complexity that may do more harm than good, especially if you POP to Outlook Express, which has a reputation for not working well with some e-mail scanning. Your internet service provider will strip out just about any malware coming through with an e-mail, and for that very small amount that might get through, the main engine of your antivirus software will grab it as soon as you open that e-mail. I discontinued e-mail scanning almost a year ago and it's been without incident. Prior to that, during 12 years of owning computers with e-mail scanning active, I've only experienced one incident of malware coming in on an e-mail.

4.) Cloud Features - More of these antivirus products are adding a cloud component each year. Unless it adds something you feel you need, it may not justify the additional complexity. Also, <u>if you occasionally use your computer disconnected from the internet, some of the cloud features may cause your computer to slow down dramatically under that circumstance, as the cloud function consumes resources while it desperately seeks an internet connection that doesn't exist</u>. In my case, I permanently turned off the cloud component, since it wasn't adding anything I felt was necessary. This, of course, wouldn't apply for cloud based products.

One consideration that should be on the list is ease of use for regular (i.e. non-geek) folks. If someone doesn't want to pay for an A/V product, I always put MSE on their computer, because it does a decent job, and it is largely set-and-forget. There isn't much, if anything, that the user has to do in order to continue to be protected for a long time."

Last edited by cloudsandskye; 2013-03-11 at 01:07. Reason: Repaired links.

Feedback and Questions from Readers:
from dg1261, 2013-02-02, and C&S answers:
Who established the above list and how? *I established the list myself using my own research. My intention was to include every free antivirus/antimalware product with an adequate sample size of user scores.*

Are any sources weighted as more influential? *All users are treated as having an equal opinion; no source is weighted as more influential than another. But, the sample size of user scores has influence on the ranking, so the average score from a sample size of 500 on one website will have more influence than the average score from a sample size of 50 on another website.*

How is the ranking handled when websites don't review the same products? *The product has to be identical across the included websites. If a website doesn't include that product, then that website is excluded from the final score for that product.*

What happens when one website ranks one product better than another and the next website ranks them vice versa? *Since I'm using the average user score from each website, rather than how a product ranks on each website, ranking among the websites is not part of the analysis. I'm creating my own unique ranking based on the user scores.*

from Tinto Tech, 2013-02-02, with C&S answer:
Is there any information on tools that seem to be missing from the list? ..... from ESET, Kaspersky, Trend, Bull Guard or Emsisoft, to name but a few? *Only free antivirus/antimalware software products are included in my ranking. It might be possible to do a ranking of pay products, but that's something someone else would have to investigate since pay products don't really interest me.*

Tinto Tech, replying 2013-02-03:   Thanks, and sorry, I didn't read the thread correctly: I assumed it included subscription based products too.

Your methods of ranking appear sound, but as a note of caution to to a casual reader, they are only based on users views on usability rather than performance. I would suggest that readers who are wanting the best product also need to be aware of performance. Your summary comments help illuminate this and casual readers would be well advised to read and assess those details too.

from A1ex, 2013-02-03:
Avast has been a favourite of mine for some time. I now use the latest version with Win8 Pro x64 and have not had any problems.   I have used AVG, MSE and several others in the past, even back to Norton Utilities (God forbid), but none seemed as reliable and easy to use as Avast.

from DarrellGood: Thanks for the list!
Why didn't you mention Unthreat Antivirus? It's really easy to use and it's free as well. Have you heard of it?
Ans. To make the list, a product has to meet two criteria: 1) an adequate sample size of users, and 2) participation in controlled testing with a defined database of malware. Unthreat Free met the first criteria, but not the second. There are several free products that fall into this group. I did make an exception for the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool and included it on the list because I think many people forget about this useful product or don't even know about it. The user scores for Unthreat Free would rank it between Ad-Aware and ZoneAlarm. Unthreat is a relatively new software company which is licensing the Vipre antivirus engine and repackaging it into their own proprietary product. Testing of the Vipre product shows it to have above average malware blocking, average malware detection, and below average malware removal. I don't know what changes Unthreat made to their product which would differentiate it from the Vipre product, so I can't just use the Vipre test results as a substitute for Unthreat test results.

[end]