

The Windows Secrets' Newsletter top utilities

“Note: In the following lists, updated June 30, 2016, we’ve linked each product to its information/download page online. Most of the listed products have been recommended by Windows Secrets contributors.”

The name of the program is in blue (and provides the link to the source).

The software company name is in black, preceding this, if different.

Comments in italics added by Gary Patrick, independent from the information provided by Windows Secrets.

When we set up a new PC, here are the first 10 utilities we install:

- *A full-time Anti-Virus (or Internet Security) program of your choice. These are available for free, or paid. Nearly all of them update automatically and run automatically in the background, monitoring all communications of your p.c., and file transfers, to and from the internet.*
- [Malwarebytes Anti-Malware](#) (free/paid) *The free version is software you run manually to look for viruses or malware that your regular full-time Anti-malware program may have missed. When downloading Malwarebytes, be careful if you want the free version; the sequence of webpages to download it may be tricky, trying to entice you to take the paid version. The free version is sufficient. Recommendation – invoke Malwarebytes about once-a-month, or if your computer begins acting abnormally! You need to “check for updates” manually as well (sensible before running it). The paid version updates and runs automatically.*
- [Dropbox](#) (free/paid; cloud storage, and file synching between multiple computers and mobile devices, to back up your data). *2 Gigabytes of storage is provided free. Its competition, offering at least some free storage, is Microsoft OneDrive, Google Drive, Mozy, or Apple iDrive. Paid providers include Carbonite and SugarSync.*

- Piriform [CCleaner](#) (free/paid; diagnostics and repair). *CCleaner is a program you run manually to find and remove outdated temporary files, memory cache files, cookies, and more clutter on your hard disk drive. You can click on the "analyse" button to see how many megabytes of what it will remove, before deciding to "run" the cleaner, if you wish.*

Here is a well written, illustrated article recommending what to clean with CCleaner: www.howtogeek.com/113382/how-to-use-ccleaner-like-a-pro-9-tips-tricks/

Recommendation – run CCleaner about once-a-month to restore efficient use of your hard drive capacity.

CCleaner has optional tools to save particular cookies from the cleaner, or determine the programs that start up automatically when Windows starts, explained in the "howtogeek" article.

- [7-Zip](#) (free; file compression and/or encryption)
- [KeePass Password Safe](#) (free; see excellent alternatives, in Security – Password Vaults, below)
- VideoLAN [VLC media player](#) (free). *This is a free substitute for Windows Media Center (built into Windows up through Windows 7, but no longer included in Windows 8 or Windows 10).*
- [Skype](#) (free/paid; Web-based communications) *Now owned by Microsoft, Skype allows once to have "videophone" communication with anyone who also installs Skype, using an internet connection.*
- [Notepad ++](#). *An enhanced text editor program that seems especially attuned to writers of software code.*

Diagnostics and repair

Total system

- ITSTH [WhatsMyComputerDoing](#) (free) *This program gives a more complete view than Windows Task Manager of what processes are running and consuming what resources.*
- BillP Studios [WinPatrol](#) (free/paid). *WinPatrol gives one a good view and control of what programs run at start-up of Windows. Optimizing this list can improve the time it takes Windows to start up on your computer. To some extent, CCleaner can provide similar control of your Windows Start-up list (by invoking one of its optional tools)*

Hard drive

- PassMark [DiskCheckup](#) (free/paid). *This program reads the self-test and performance logging built into modern hard disk drives, called the SMART (Self-monitoring, analysis, and reporting technology) data. It may give you warning that disk-drive reads and writes are becoming unreliable (i.e. requiring excessive error correction on-the-fly).*
- Paragon [Drive Copy 14 Pro](#) (paid). *Disk backup and imaging.*
- Paragon [Hard Disk Manager](#) (paid).
- EFD Software [HD Tune](#) (free/paid) *is another hard drive performance monitor, including the reporting of SMART data.*
- [Paragon Alignment Tool](#) (paid) *Fixes accidental misalignment of logical partition sectors with actual physical sectors on a hard disk (that can cause redundant read/write operations). Especially, may improve the lifespan of solid-state drives.*
- Paragon [Partition Manager](#) (free/paid)

- EaseUS [Partition Master](#) (free/paid)

Mobility

- Softpedia [CoreTemp](#) (free) *Monitors the core temperature of the CPU in your computer, and warns if it's getting too hot. Heat shortens the life of computer circuit chips.*
- [Softpedia [MobileMeter](#) (free) *Disregard this one, because it has not been updated to work beyond Windows XP or Server 2003]*
- [SpeedFan](#) (free) *Monitors voltages, fan speed(s), and temperature(s) inside computers that have hardware monitor chips.*

Other

- Nirsoft [USBDeview](#) (free). Reports the status of each USB port and devices connected to it. (Nirsoft sometimes gets flagged as a potentially malicious site. You can ignore the warnings; the site is legitimate).

Entertainment

Imaging applications

- [GIMP](#) (free). *Very versatile image editing, for photographs, for example, like Photoshop, but having a very different user interface.*
- [Greenshot](#) (free; screen-capture tool)
- CodePlex [Image Resizer](#) (free)
- [Mp3tag](#) (free; music metatag editor)
- [Paint.NET](#) (free). *Graphics creation and editing.*
- [PhotoFiltre](#) (free). *Photo editing.*

General Utilities

- Mythicsoft [Agent Ransack](#) (free) *A file search utility to find information in your computer files; does a full text search.*
- Avanquest [PowerDesk Pro](#) (paid) *A file manager with more features and functions than the Windows File Manager.*
- [Copernic](#) (free/paid; desktop search)
- [DOSBox](#) (free; MS-DOS emulator)
- [ISO Recorder](#) (free) *Burn or copy CDs or DVDs; this program was written for Windows XP and does not seem to have been updated past Windows 7.*
- [Nitro Pro](#) (free trial/paid; PDF creator)
- Jujuba's [PC Benchmark](#) (free; Win8 performance tests)
- [Pdfcrowd](#) (free/paid; webpage-to-PDF conversion)
- TechSmith [Snagit](#) (free trial/paid; screen capture)
- Microsoft [SyncToy](#) (free) *Has an easy-to-use graphical interface for synchronizing versions of files (and folders) between devices.*
- [TeamViewer](#) (free trial/paid; remote access/control)
- Jam [TreeSize Free](#). *Provides a File Directory Tree more versatile than Windows Explorer (File Explorer); can show you quite directly how much storage memory is used by individual files and folders.*
- Oracle [VirtualBox](#) (free). *Sets up a "virtual machine" where one can run a second operating system independently of the primary one. (For example, run Linux inside a Windows operating system)*

Security

Browser addons

- Codefocus [Donotlink](#) (free; search-site privacy service)
- [NoScript](#) (free; Script blocker for Firefox)
- EFF [Privacy Badger](#) (Chrome and Firefox; free; helps block online tracking). *This is the only ad-blocker that's mentioned, though.*
- Ove [Self-Destructing Cookies](#) (for Firefox; free; full-time cookie crusher)

Encryption

- [Boxcryptor](#) (free/paid; updated to support Windows 10)
- [VeraCrypt](#) (free/paid; the successor to TrueCrypt)

Firewall checkers

- HackerWatch [Probe](#) (free)
- [ShieldsUP](#) (Gibson Research Corporation; free)

Networking

- Metageek [inSSIDer](#) (free) *InSSIDer 4-Personal analyses your (home) WIFI network for signal strength, finds channel conflicts, and recommends channels, security and configuration settings for your access point(s). InSSIDer 4 is \$20; I did not find a free offering.*

On demand antivirus scanners. *You can access one of these programs online for an alternate malware scan on your p.c.*

- ESET [Online Virus Scanner](#) (free)
- [Microsoft Safety Scanner](#) (free)

- Trend Micro [HouseCall](#) (free)

Online password checkers

- [How secure is my password?](#)
- [How big is your haystack?](#) (Gibson Research Corporation; free)
- [Password Meter](#) (free)

Password recovery

- [Offline registry tools and password resetter](#)

Password vaults

- AgileBits [1Password](#) (paid)
- [LastPass](#) (free/paid) [How big is your haystack?](#)
- Siber Systems [RoboForm](#) (free/paid)

Windows security

- Microsoft [EMET](#) (free) Stands for “Enhanced Mitigation Experience Toolkit.” Its function is to fine-tune Windows security features so as to provide an extra layer of defense against malware attacks, after the firewall but before an anti-virus program – (definition from Wikipedia) Recommended for advanced Windows users only, because some of its settings may require trial and error not to have some undesirable side effects.