

Avast! (ALWIL) Antivirus Software

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Let me start with an analogy: If you needed an automobile, what would you buy? Would it depend on what you wanted it to do (work, vacation, errands, family, etc.)? Are there “extras” you would need (cargo space, GPS system, TV, etc.)? Would cost be a factor? Some people only want to have basic transportation, and a simple compact car is all they need. Others may have a large family and travel a lot, so they may need a van with extra space, more comfortable seating, and entertainment extras. Still others may want a flashy sports car, or the most expensive and prestigious luxury car money can buy.

The same is true for computer software. Will the simple and free “Notepad” meet your writing needs, or do you need “WordPad” for additional fonts and formatting? Maybe you need Microsoft “Word” for even more options, or possibly the full Microsoft “Office Suite” to integrate multiple features.

Antivirus software is also available with a range of choices and features to meet your needs. There are simple “basic” programs that detect and remove, quarantine, and/or repair virus problems. Others may scan for other malware (as spyware), allow automatic or manual setting changes, permit system scan scheduling options, and/or provide different levels of customer or technical support. You need to determine what factors are important to you, and then select antivirus software that meets those needs.

ALWIL Software, a Czech-based company established in April 1991, produces “avast!” antivirus software. They offer “avast! Home Edition” free of charge (only for home users and non-commercial use), and if you do not meet both conditions, sell “avast! Professional Edition” with additional features. Details on both of these products may be found on the ALWIL website at: <http://www.avast.com>.

Both products can be downloaded from this website and evaluated for 60 days on a fully functional trial basis before registration is required. You can register the avast! Home Edition via the Free Registration page (and receive your license key by email within 24 hours), or purchase the avast! Professional Edition online or via listed US resellers.

The downloaded software (approximately 10 MB) can be automatically installed very quickly and easily. A current VPS (virus database signature update file) can be loaded manually, or set to automatically check and download VPS updates every time you connect to the Internet.

Take the time to open and look at the “Help” menu! The first three screens contain important welcome information, differences between the Home and Professional versions, and how to obtain technical support. Telephone support is provided for the Professional version only, but Home version support includes excellent website forums and/or email support.

The look and feel of the menu screens, as well as the software features, may take you a while to learn and to find a comfort level in using them. Use the Help Menu and ALWIL website forums to answer any questions. We have installed a licensed “avast! 4 Professional Edition” on our New Jersey Computer Club computer, and everything currently seems to be working properly. As we gain experience with it we will periodically give you updates, and will have it at our meetings for Q&A.

A full evaluation review and demo of this software will be presented at our September 13, 2006, NJCC regular meeting. Please contact me directly if you have any questions or problems before then.