Can You Check for Malware before Downloading It?

There's generally no way to check a download for malware without downloading it first. Services that claim to do so appear to download to your computer anyway before they perform their checks. As long as you don't run or open it, it's usually safe to download and then run a scan on what you've downloaded before using it. As always, only download from sources you trust to decrease the odds of ever encountering malware to begin with.

Downloading safely

A download must be on your machine before you can scan it for malware.

With that in mind, here's how you download safely.

•Download only from sites you trust. This means downloading from major hardware and software vendors, sites, and companies you know and trust.

•Download/Save, never Run/Open. "Download" just saves the file to your hard disk. Running or opening the file does that, but then runs whatever it is you've just downloaded before you've had a chance to find out whether it's malicious or not.

•Scan the download for malware. Most security software has ability to scan a single file or directory.

Right click on a file to scan with Microsoft Defender.

Right-click on a file to scan it with Microsoft Defender.

•Assuming your security software reported no problems, run or otherwise use the download.

•If you're still concerned, re-run a security scan on your system.

If it's malicious

If your download shows up as being malicious, delete the copy you just downloaded immediately so it doesn't get run by accident. If you can, see if you can find the same download from another source. Sometimes malware is present only in some downloads of a particular piece of software.

If you can't find a clean download, don't fall into the temptation of installing it anyway. It's not worth the risk unless you really know what you're doing. Contact the supplier or manufacturer of whatever you're downloading, and report the issue to them. If they're at all reputable, they'll deal with the issue quickly.