FREE PROGRAMS THAT YOU WILL WANT TO HAVE ON YOUR COMPUTER

Here are some programs that many experts recommend that you install on your computer. Note that all of these applications are listed in blue as hyperlinks. A single left-click will take you to the official site for downloading and installing.

Have at least two browsers installed, in addition to Edge (the default that comes with Windows 10). Try **Google Chrome** and **Mozilla Firefox.** Internet Explorer is still available from within Windows 10.

Install **one** of the following free anti-virus programs: **Avira, Avast,** or **AVG.** *Remember, here is a case where more is not better!* (Windows Defender is built into Windows 10 and users may wish to stay with it when blended with Malwarebytes.)

Ninite makes loading a computer with new applications a breeze. Simply head to the Ninite website, select which programs you'd like to install on your PC—it offers dozens of options—and click *Get Installer* to receive a single file containing the installers for those programs. Run the executable and Ninite installs all of them in turn. (Run on demand.)

Malwarebytes has created an easy-to-use, simple, and effective anti-malware application. Whether you know it or not your computer is always at risk of becoming infected with viruses, worms, Trojans, rootkits, dialers, spyware, and malware that are constantly evolving and becoming harder to detect and remove. Only the most sophisticated anti-malware techniques can detect and remove these malicious programs from your computer. By the way, this application can run at the same time with your anti-virus program and will not be in conflict. (Run on demand.)

SlimComputer finds unneeded files, the ones that slow your computer down over time. There's also an uninstaller that offers advice on which software you might want to keep, and which to uninstall. It rates each program on your system as to whether you likely need it or not. You can then use that as part of your decision about whether to keep the program. The program itself doesn't actually do the ratings; instead, everyone who uses SlimComputer can rate their own programs, and that information is then collated and presented by SlimComputer. Don't expect it to be definitive, but it will help you decide whether to keep each program. (Run on demand.)

Recuva will help you to find files and images on your computer that were deleted by human error, including those deleted from your digital camera memory card or MP3 player. Recuva can also restore files deleted from the recycle bin or those that were deleted by a bug, virus or crash. (Run on demand.)

PrivaZer. According to nationally recognized tech expert Bob Rankin, this program is a hard drive clean-up utility on steroids. It gets rid of junk files and wipes away traces of activity that could compromise your privacy.

The "clean and optimize your PC" field has been crowded for years with programs like CCleaner, Advanced System Care, and many others. PrivaZer leaves them all gasping in its dust. The first time you run PrivaZer, you will be impressed by the number of clean-up options it gives you. But you won't be confused, because they are clearly and cogently explained. A recommended option doesn't just have the word "recommended" next to it; it includes a brief explanation of why it's recommended and what it will do that's different from other options.

The first scan and clean-up of your desktop or laptop will probably take several hours, not because PrivaZer is slow but because it does an enormous amount of work. Rankin has run Advanced System Care Pro on his machine at least once a week for a long time, but PrivaZer still found about a gigabyte of stuff it could trash or fix. (Run on demand.)

Secunia Personal Software Inspector (PSI) at your command will check all the software on your computer for vulnerabilities. This free program will tell you which programs need updating and provide links to sites where you can download patches. The software you use every day is the biggest source of danger to your personal information. Keeping your software up to date is your best defense. You cannot afford to let vulnerabilities go unpatched. (Run on demand.)

Sumatra PDF. Although Adobe Reader is the go-to PDF reader that's pre-installed on all laptop and desktop computers, it's clunky, constantly updating, and frequently targeted by malware peddlers. If you need only basic functionality, go with Sumatra PDF instead. Sumatra lacks the fancy extras found in many full-featured PDF readers, but when it comes to straight-up reading Portable Document Format files, Sumatra PDF is blazing-fast and completely accurate. Oh, and since it's less popular than Adobe's offering, hackers tend to stay away from Sumatra PDF. (Special note: Windows 10 has a built-in PDF viewer, available via Edge!)

LastPass or **KeePass.** The high-profile hack attacks of the past few years have driven the point home: You *need* strong passwords, and you need a different password for each site you visit. Rather than juggling dozens of alphanumeric

codes in your head, download a password manager. These two applications are highly recommended.