

WINDOWS DEFENDER: IS IT UP TO DOING ITS JOB?

Microsoft has had a long and less-than-sterling relationship with anti-malware software. There are, for example, Windows Defender versions for Win7, Win8.1, and Win10. But the Win7 edition isn't as capable as the Win8/10 editions.

Now that Defender is built into Windows 10, many users are wondering whether it can fully protect them from malware — or do they need to add a second, full-time anti-malware app, such as Malwarebytes.

According to recent independent AV-TEST results, Defender is about average for the tested products. It was 99.3 percent successful at detecting known malware and 97.3 percent successful at protecting against zero-day attacks. So though it's not among the top anti-malware products, it's still relatively good.

Of course the best protection is to use more than one AV product. Among many Windows 10 users, Windows Defender and Malwarebytes is the consensus favorite combination.

With Win10's Build 1607 (the Anniversary Edition) it is possible to install another anti-virus program that is better than Defender and use Defender as a periodic scanner. The best combination then includes a third-party anti-virus program, Windows Defender set for "limited periodic scanning", and Malwarebytes.

With the Anniversary Build installed, go to Settings, then Update & security, then Windows Defender to set Limited Periodic Scanning.

The screenshot shows the Windows Settings application. On the left is a navigation pane with the following items: Home, Find a setting (search bar), Update & security, Windows Update, Windows Defender (highlighted), Backup, Recovery, Activation, For developers, and Windows Insider Program. The main content area displays the Windows Defender settings. At the top, it states: "Windows Defender is periodically scanning your PC for threats. Turn on Real-time protection to protect your PC before a threat occurs." Below this is a button labeled "Open Windows Defender". The "Limited Periodic Scanning" section is active, with the text: "Windows Defender is periodically scanning your PC for threats, and will notify you if any threats are found." A toggle switch for "Real-time protection" is turned on, with the label "On" next to it. Below this is a link for "Privacy Statement". The "Real-time protection" section is also visible, with the text: "Real-time protection is off because you have an existing antivirus program. Uninstall your existing AV program to turn on Windows Defender Real-time protection." A toggle switch for "Real-time protection" is turned off, with the label "On" next to it.