# Optimize and Secure Your New Windows 11 Computer

**Step One is security.** Antivirus software is a must on any PC, but the trial versions of Norton or McAfee that come preinstalled on new PCs are overpriced resource hogs. Some popular free antivirus options are AVG , Avast, and  PC Matic. Uninstall the trial antivirus that came with your PC, then install your new security software.

**Step Two: Getting rid of bloatware.** Bloatware (sometimes called crapware) is not malicious software. Rather, it's the term for all those unnecessary utilities and trial software packages that computer vendors are paid to load onto each new PC they ship. Many of these nuisances load automatically at startup, slowing your PC and annoying you with reminders to try them out. Essentially, they're just advertisements that you pay to be annoyed by.

If you want to rid a brand-new system of all the unnecessary junk programs that came installed on it, try the free Bulk Crap Uninstaller utility. This program lets you see all the software installed on your system, so you can quickly select the ones you want to remove, and zap them in one swift move, with minimal effort. It's a lot faster than the Windows "Add/Remove Software" option, which requires you to select each one and answer a lot of "do you really want to do this" questions.

**Step Three: Keeping your operating system and application software up to date** is also essential. Security patches are issued regularly by Microsoft, and these improvements are not really "optional." Make sure Windows is set to download important updates automatically (it usually is on new PCs) and enable automatic updates on all application software that has such a feature. You might be surprised to learn that some of the application software pre-loaded on your computer is outdated or needs critical security patches.

**Patch My PC silently updates over 300 popular programs.** I like that it downloads your updates directly from the software vendor websites, to ensure you're getting the official version from the most up-to-date source. It takes only a few seconds for it to identify any software that needs updating. Even better, it strips the foistware out of installation packages before installing updates; no toolbars or browser hijackings!

Also nice is that programs update silently, bypassing the "install wizards." There's an option to create a restore point before updating, and you can also use it to quickly uninstall any unwanted programs. Patch My PC is 100% free and downloads quickly. The user interface is a bit cluttered, but just keep in mind that outdated software will show in Red, and software that's already up to date will show in Green. You can scroll

through the list of suggested updates in the left column and uncheck any items that you do not want to update. Patch My PC works on Windows 7 and higher.

**[Ninite](#) is a similar tool for software updates.** It doesn't scan your system for outdated software, but instead focuses on simplifying the process of downloading, installing and updating your programs. Ninite bundles software installers and updates into a single, foistware-free package. Just check boxes next to the programs that you want to install or update, click "Get Your Ninite" and Ninite does the rest.

It fetches the latest files from the vendor websites, bundles them in a Ninite installer package, and downloads just one file to your computer. When the Ninite installer is run, it installs and/or updates everything in the background, stripping the foistware out of each. It eliminates all the Next, Next, Next button clicking during the installation.

**Step Four: Taking inventory of your PC's hardware and software** can help you diagnose problems, get better tech support, and possibly even save you untold grief and piles of money. Belarc Advisor and Speccy are two free utilities that scan your system and report everything you may need to know

**Step Five: Making regular backups** of user data and system settings is a good habit that starts from day one. As soon as your PC is tweaked the way you want it, make a full "system image" of your hard drive and store it in a safe place. Thereafter, automatic backups of critical data that changes over time can be set up on whatever schedule makes sense for you. Hard drive failure, viruses, fire, flood and human error can wipe out critical data, and if it happens to you a backup copy of your files will be a lifesaver.

**Step Six: Update Drivers** - If you find that any of your peripheral devices are not working correctly after connecting them to your new computer, you may need to install or update the drivers for the hardware, such as a mouse, printer, external drive, graphics card, or network adapter. Look for these drivers on the manufacturer's website, along with instructions to download and install.

You may encounter popups or emails warnings that 'Your drivers are out of date.' Ignore those scammy ads. Don't run off and update your drivers unless you're sure there is a problem.