

Study Reveals Surprising Results In Comparing 3 Anti-Spyware Programs

PC World Magazine just conducted a wonderful test study on several antispyware tools, to see how they matched up against the latest "infections" on the web. We feature three of those here and their results.

The antispyware tools that were tested were Grisoft's AVG Anti-Spyware 7.5, Microsoft's Windows Defender 1.1, and PC Tools' Spyware Doctor 5.0. They were run through a gammit of tests to detect whether or not the products can not only find and detect adware and spyware, but be able to clean them from your computer and registry.

They marked "Spyware Doctor 5.0" as the best buy. According to Ryan Naraine of PC World, "Spyware Doctor did an excellent job identifying and uprooting adware". Naraine claims the results in regards to spyware were "less than impressive", but were still better than the other products tested. Naraine says, "Spyware Doctor detected 81 percent of inactive adware samples and 100 percent of active adware samples, and it successfully removed almost all of the active adware samples." Spyware Doctor also classifies ad tracking cookies as spyware which, according to the test, flagged some items from sites like Google, Yahoo and the New York Times. It does lend itself to some areas of improvement, but for \$30, you can't go wrong.

The next product tested was AVG's Anti-Spyware 7.5. According to testing the product faired well in uncovering known adware and spyware, detecting 19 of 20 of them, with the only one not found being the Banbra Trojan Horse, which shockingly is the one that attempts to collect banking information. Even though the test showed that AVG deactivated 50 percent of the spyware files and registry entries, it only cleaned about 30 percent of them. Naraine says, "AVG Anti-Spyware is easy to use, with self-explanatory icons at the top of the main interface. On the downside, it lacks antiphishing protection to keep you from going to fraudulent financial sites looking for personal information, and it has no POP3, IMAP, and SMTP scanning to block e-mail-borne spyware threats. Also, you can't set a system restore point in case you accidentally delete critical files during a disinfection routine."

Spy Sweeper 5.5 was next on the list, and as Naraine puts it, "Things have changed for the worse with version 5.5. The software demonstrates excellent behavior-based detection capabilities, but we were disappointed at how the program struggled to remove adware and spyware from the test PC." The testing showed the program only detected 85% of bad files and registry entries, and get this only 2% of ones relating to banking, and only cleaned up 25% of the adware problems and even worse 15% of spyware.

You would have thought, with Microsoft being the large corporation that it is, and having access to the underlying operating system level, it would have faired well. Apparently, the operating system level developers, do not allow the anti-spyware programmers to talk to them, I am just kidding of course. Microsoft's Windows Defender version 1.1 ships free with Vista, and can be downloaded from their website if you are running XP SP2. In tests the program detected 50% of the infected files, mostly adware, and was able to remove 55% of the files and registry entries, according to the study. However, Naraine says, "In our tests the program neither detected nor disinfected the ten active spyware threats we introduced. It detected only 7 percent of the inactive password stealers we threw at it." The tests also showed that it did do a nice job with recognizing changes to the registry as well as to IE, but the test also showed that if spyware gets past its first line of defense, you will still need another product to clean it up.

You have some options depending on what you want to spend, and how much hassle you want to go through, however, you will want to implement some kind of protection if you plan on using your computer to surf the net, and of course...who doesn't.

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Bruce A. Tucker is the Associate Director of indocquent.com. indocquent.com is an online resource that allows anti-spyware retailers, providers and manufacturers to post their products and services for sale in 20,000 cities throughout 200 countries around the world free of charge.

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