

## NORTON ANTIVIRUS 4 - AVG

Some people have asked me about AVG Free, a free anti-virus program from Grisoft. The website for free download is <http://free.grisoft.com> (link at the bottom). This program seems to work well, I have seen it pick up infected files on a second pass after running Norton's, though it only tests 86% effective at <http://av-comparitives.org>. We have found that it uses a fair amount of memory, approximately 17 Mb, but only 3 processes, so its effect on system resources isn't nearly as traumatic as NAV 2005. This program is a reasonable alternative to actually paying for a good retail product like F-Prot. We now use it here in the shop for a freeware load.

Shaw Secure is a group of programs provided by F-Secure, a company not to be confused with F-Prot. I can't say much about this suite, other than that I have uninstalled it many times. The best thing that can be said about it is that it is free for Shaw clients and that it is supposed to be relatively easy to use. Unfortunately, because most people install it after they have developed other Windows troubles, either viral or spyware-related, and after they have tried multiple other solutions, the program ends up causing more trouble than it is worth. It may work well on a fresh load of Windows, but I have only ever seen it blown to smithereens.

The other program I have been asked about is Panda AntiVirus software. There are a number of different packages available, but I only have subjective experience with one, the Panda Platinum Internet Security 2005. This suite includes the virus scanner but also has firewall protection, spam protection and spyware protection, so overall it is a very comprehensive package. Unfortunately, it weighs in at 11 processes and 46 Mb of system RAM, making it the biggest, fattest piece of security software I have tested. Both P4 systems I saw it on were practically crippled with the load. If I were a Shaw High Speed Internet client, I would probably use this before I downloaded the Shaw Secure package (even though it is free), IF I felt it necessary to run this kind of software at all. On Shaw, I would feel perfectly safe with a hardware firewall (\$50) and F-Prot for anti-virus. Best of all, my machine would run like a top.

Other virus protection options are online scanners. These web-based applications do not provide continuous protection for your PC, they merely scan your machine on demand. All of the ones I have ever seen or tested are really just front-ends for their retail final user product. In other words, you get a free online scan in exchange for a pile of advertising to buy the real thing. Most of these companies do not seem to mind hounding you about buying their product; after all they did provide you with a free scan. These web scans can be quite effective, but it is important to note that any particularly well-designed malware is going to prevent you from even getting to the site to try the scan. Additionally, they usually need to install some kind of an ActiveX control into your browser (just like all that spyware) to be able to perform the scan. I never use them personally.

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email [sean@intrex.ca](mailto:sean@intrex.ca) or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.