

Re: Short List of Security Questions

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- *From:* "BC" <callmebc@xxxxxxxxxx>
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Steve Dassin wrote:

Hello BC,

Do you have some mercy feelings for newbees trying to study security? :(:)

Do you have a list of recommendations (practices, software) for windows?

Thank you,
steve

Well, I think there are three separate aspects to PC security:

- 1) Prevention — blocking bugs and hacks
- 2) Early detection — catching a bug or a hack before it can do real harm
- 3) Recovery — ok, so you got whacked; now what do you do?

All these aspects are tricky — the easy methods will take you reasonably far in avoiding the majority of problems, but if a determined hacker has it in for you particularly, very elaborate and expensive methods and technology are needed. Even then, as many a company and agency painfully knows, one little slip up....

I don't have the time today for a lengthy post, but I do have specific recommendations for a new WinXp PC

- 1) If you use dial-up, be aware that this gives you a very exposed connection to the Internet as opposed to using a router with DSL or cablemodem connection. Be sure you have at least the Windows firewall on and running before connecting with dial-up.

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- 2) Uninstall every preloaded program that comes on your new PC that you didn't specifically ask for, especially demos and Norton/McAfee security suites.
- 3) Google for and download the latest version of "ccleaner" — "Crap Cleaner" — and run that with its defaults after uninstalling stuff.
- 4) Once you have your PC the way you want it, go into Windows Update and get all the latest and greatest patches
- 5) After getting patched up, go to Mozilla.com and get and download the latest Firefox and Thunderbird.
- 6) If you want to use Outlook for contacts and schedules, fine, but use Thunderbird for your email.
- 7) Go to Adobe.com and download and install the latest Flashplayer. This will make your Firefox pretty set for general Internet browsing. I also like changing the cache from 50mb to 10 and customizing the Toolbar to show the Printer and New Tab icons
- 8) Go to Microsoft and download and install the latest IE 7 Beta and Windows Defender. IE 7 is a ripoff of Firefox but that's a good thing. Still don't use it unless a site doesn't support non-IE browsers
- 9) Pony up and get yourself a good European anti-virus/antispysware package: F-Secure, Kaspersky, etc. AVG is not bad and its 2 yr license is good for people who tend to forget to renew such stuff — a big, BIG no-no nowadays.
- 10) Avoid multiple login accounts, especially for "family " PC's — that just ends up creating a bazillion more files to scan and gives computer illiterate kids a green light to download junk and screw with the PC settings.
- 11) Go Google for some How-to's about making specific changes to Windows to make it more secure, like this:
http://www.tweakhound.com/xp/security/page_1.htm
- 12) Go get a portable hard drive to use as a system backup using something like Acronis True image for disaster recovery.

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13) Use a USB Flash card to back up important docs. Go you 2brightsparks.com and get either the free or cheap commercial version of SyncBackSE for everyday backups of important files and email.

In addition to the above, my own personal preference is to immediatly wipe the hard drive of a new PC prior to activation and recreate the partitions with FAT32 system (20–30Gb) for the boot partition and the rest NTFS, and then install XP clean. If I want to use XP -- for everyday use, I much prefer Win98, and then Win2k for things like video editing where you need something like NTFS for huge files.

FYI

Gotta run -- hope that was helpful.

-BC

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