**Anti-virus Advice**

Version 1.0

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# What is an anti-virus product?

An anti-virus product is a program designed to detect and remove viruses and other kinds of malicious software from your computer or laptop.

Malicious software (known as malware) is code that can harm your computers and laptops, and the data on them. Your devices can become infected by inadvertently downloading malware that's in an attachment linked to a dubious email, hidden on a USB/portable drive, or on a suspicious website. Sometimes malware is discovered on legitimate websites which have been hacked.

Once it is on your computer or laptop, malware can steal your data, encrypt it so you can't access it, or even erase it completely. For this reason, it is important that you *always* use anti-virus software and keep it up to date to protect your data and devices.

Some cyber criminals will encrypt or threaten to delete your data unless they receive a payment. This type of attack is known as ransomware. In these cases the ransom should *never* be paid and attacks should be reported to the police through the [Action Fraud website](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud). [Action Fraud](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/) is the UK’s national fraud and cyber-crime reporting centre.

# How does anti-virus software work?

Anti-virus products work by detecting, quarantining, and/or deleting malicious code to prevent malware from causing damage to your device. Modern anti-virus products update themselves automatically to provide protection against the latest viruses and other types of malware.

It is important that anti-virus updates and scans are allowed to run and that they are not regularly postponed.

# Only use one product

Anti-virus software is often included for free with new machines. This initial cover will make your machines instantly safer. At some point it is likely that the license will require you to pay for on-going updates and support.

New computers often come with a trial version of a separate anti-virus product installed (such as McAfee, Norton, and Avast). Separate anti-virus products won't always work alongside the built-in anti-virus software. The vaults containing the reference information for viruses can falsely pick up another anti-virus vault and can stop it from working completely. Only use one anti-virus product.

# How do I use my anti-virus product?

1. When you first install (or switch on) your anti-virus product, run a **full scan** to make sure your computer is free of all known malware.
2. Make sure your anti-virus software is set to automatically scan all new files, such as those downloaded from the internet or stored on a USB stick, external hard drive, SD card, or other type of removable media.
3. Make sure your anti-virus software is set to receive updates automatically.

# Do I need anti-virus products on my smartphone and tablet?

Provided that apps and software are installed from official stores such as Google Play and the Apple App Store, devices will be covered by the extensive checks carried out by these vendors. However, this is not always the case and anti-virus products add better protection.

You should also set your apps (and the tablet / smartphone itself) to update automatically.