Computers are an essential part of many people's day to day lives. Contracting a computer virus can cripple your ability to communicate with others or earn a living. Luckily many sources are available to find free antivirus software that will allow you to protect your investment.

Sources for finding free antivirus software online are plentiful. Here are some suggestions for the best free software to prevent computer viruses.

Spybot Search and Destroy and Malwarebytes are two very popular antivirus programs which are available for free download. They are targeted towards spyware and Trojans. These types of programs are less visible to the naked eye than some viruses. They can be downloaded without your knowledge and hidden on your computer.

Another great option for antivirus software is Avast. Avast is geared more towards traditional viruses and operates through a search and destroy type method of virus hunting. A product like Avast can work well in tandem with software like Spybot and Malwarebytes. Installing both types of programs can provide extra protection for your computer. Searching for all types of damaging programs increases your protection.

If you're unsure about downloading software and consider yourself a very basic computer user, Microsft Security Essentials can be a great option. It is a brand new product from Microsoft that combines spyware and antivirus protection. The program is free for home and home business users of Windows XP and beyond. It runs itself and does a good job without much interaction.

If you're a more tech savvy user, a product like Comodo Antivirus can be very effective. This program is very vocal, and pops up a lot of messages for permissions when you're using your computer. If you're using Windows Vista you have probably noticed the numerous permissions pop ups. If you dislike them or are annoyed by them, this probably isn't the best antivirus software for you.

Finding legitimate sources for free antivirus software can be a challenge. It is important to make sure you are downloading a reputable, trustworthy program. Rogue anti-virus software usually appears as a fake Windows warning on your computer. It will tell you about the dozens or

hundreds of viruses it's detected, and ask you to purchase the full version of the antivirus software.

In reality, if you click to purchase, you will be downloading what is also known as scareware or malware. It's a program specifically designed to damage or disrupt your computer system. In addition, they are trying to take your money through an unsecure credit card purchase. The best way to avoid downloading rogue anti-virus software is to know which antivirus software you installed, and avoid purchasing or clicking on any notifications that are not from that software.

What should you do if you ever get a pop up or notification that looks legitimate but does not look like the antivirus software you use? Immediately scan your computer using your legitimate antivirus software. It's important to know which programs you've installed on your computer since people who make viruses and rogue software are very good at making them look legitimate.

What if you suspect that your computer has already contracted a virus? You can download the free versions of Spybot Search and Destroy, Malwarebytes or Spyware Doctor and run them. They will not interfere with your current or previously installed antivirus programs.

Super Antispyware is a good program to download if you suspect you already have a virus. It can be more effective at evading detection by spyware that is already on your machine. If you run a spyware scan and your computer locks up, shuts down, or the program closes, it is a good idea to seek immediate technical support.

If you're unsure which free antivirus software to choose, message boards, forums and reviews are a great source. Find people who use their computer similarly to how you do, and see what they've found to work best. That way you can get good information and start protecting your computer immediately.

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