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Ad-Aware 2008

By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews

[Ad-Aware 2008 Final](#)

Improved efficiency in fighting nasties

Ad-Aware 2008 has finally arrived. It needs absolutely no introduction and the final version has been awaited for quite some time. It is [here now](#) and ready to pull you out of spyware jams but, more importantly, it is ready to help your computer dodge spyware infections, as well as provide you with the necessary tools to watch over your processes, registry entries and tell you which software is currently connected to the Web. The free version for personal home use has not been taken off the market, while the Plus and Pro editions are also available for \$26.95 and \$39.95 respectively. Feature differences are the only ones separating the three editions of the software, as the same interface governs them all and the same ease of use has been injected in all of them. As usual, Lavasoft did not add any bells and whistles to the application, but maintained only its functionality, integrating it in a beautifully drawn GUI incapable of giving a hard time to any type of user, regardless of his/her computer skills. Actually, it is the same interface as last year's, with slight changes here and there, but nothing major. Installing the program provides the user with two choices: standard installation or advanced installation. The difference between the two consists in the fact that the latter allows you to make some customizations for when the installation process is completed. Thus, at the end of set-up operation, you can configure Ad-Aware to start and initialize a full or smart scan, or just start and wait for your command, or launch Ad-Watch feature (available only in Plus and Pro versions). At the end of the installation process a user friendly interface awaits, equipped with all the features for rooting nasties out of your computer. The 2008 version comes with improved threat detection, enhanced rootkit removal system, support for Vista 32-bit and 64-bit systems and ThreatWork, a feature that allows the user to contribute to Lavasoft's list of suspicious files by sending them to analysis. All menus run down on the left-hand side of the application window, providing users with easy reach to all Ad-Aware 2008 features. All of them are drop-down menus comprising options for viewing the current status of the machine, initialize a scan (options are available according to the edition used), setting up web updates, access to built-in tools and configuration of the software. Status menu offers general information on the system protection, definitions, time and date for the last scan performed and results, as well as on the Ad-Aware version you are using (Free, Plus or Pro). You get to learn if real-time protection is turned on or off (restricted to the Plus and Pro editions) or if automatic updates feature is enabled. For details on the scans and the malware detected and removed, move to Statistics sub-menu of Status and view general information on the last scan type, date and time, total number of scans performed on your system, as well as the total amount of objects scanned, removed or quarantined. And, if you want to see the malware the application dealt with, take a look in the Detailed Statistics tab of the same sub-menu. Starting a scan on your computer requires making a decision on how thorough you want it to be and what areas you want to be checked. A smart scan will check the most critical parts of your system such as registry, processes and system folders, while a full scan will verify every nook and cranny of the system. These two support a certain level of customization in the sense that you have a say with regards to scanning options and get to select if files of a certain size need to be checked, if tracking cookies should be rooted out or if MRU files have to be checked. All these options are available in Settings area of the program. A custom scan, on the other hand, grants you full liberty in selecting the areas of your system to be verified. Ad-Aware 2008 lets you choose between active processes, registry, registry executables, Hosts file, tracking cookies, browser hijacks, LSPs or MRUs. As for files, users can select only executables to be verified, or include archives and

alternate data stream in the process. Also, you can choose to evaluate any folder on the computer. Scheduler, an additional function, puts you in charge when it comes to managing when and how the scans are performed automatically by Ad-Aware. It is a three-step procedure allowing you to select the type of scan you wish to be performed, its frequency, and the time and date the scheduling should come into force. Ad-Aware 2008 makes available quarantined items, offering you the possibility to restore or delete them, as you see fit. Information panel provides details on the family of malware detected (spyware, hacktool, trojan, etc.) and the location on disk, as well as the time and date of entering into quarantine. In Ignore List, the details are not as numerous as in Quarantine sheet, but you will be provided with the storage path to the ignored file and a brief description of the issue Ad-Aware had with it. In order to keep you protected from the latest spyware threats, the program has a special section dedicated to retrieving the latest definition files directly from Lavasoft. Users can download the most recent updates either manually or by creating a scheduling plan for an automatic operation. For the latter, you have to access Scan's Scheduler module and choose WebUpdates when adding the task. The settings for definition files include changing the storage directory, enabling backup creation or setting a timeframe to remind you when the current definition files are outdated. For those behind a proxy, Ad-Aware makes available the necessary options for connecting to the Internet this way. On the list of Tools and Plug-ins, users will find real helpers that prove handy in managing running processes (Process Watch is available only in Pro version of the program) or for editing hosts file (Hosts File Editor is available only for Pro and Plus versions of the application). Both tools open in separate windows offering a comfortable space to work in. Process Watch is nothing more than a process manager that lists all currently running processes, allowing the user their termination with a click of a button. It is more advanced than Windows Task Manager in that it also lists process modules and complete path, as well as priority of each thread. Even more, Ad-Aware's process manager lets the user restart the activity of a process, suspend it, set its CPU priority and google it for more details. Hosts File Editor is a good instrument for blocking advertisement websites or reverse browser hijack entries, and to generally assist with parental controls. The module permits redirecting a hostname to a different IP address. It sports a search function for easy reach of the desired hostname or IP address, and displays the status of each entry in the list. Another tool packed in Ad-Aware 2008 is TrackSweep, an instrument designed to erase the tracks left by your surfing on the Internet. It supports the three major web browsers on the market (Internet Explorer, Firefox and Opera) and covers elements such as cache files, cookies, history, last typed URLs and cleans the tabs. For the cleaning operation to be a success, you need to close all browsers you want Ad-Aware to sweep, otherwise no change will take effect. Ad-Aware 2008 comes with a neat Settings panel, clean and easy to work with, that provides the means to set the default homepage and search page in order to be protected against hijacking, gives access to log files and lets you customize the user interface by applying different skins. Additional possibilities allow users customization of the scans by choosing the areas to be verified and selecting a comfortable level of heuristics. More than this, you can tune the performance by enabling scans as a background process or remove progress bar during scan. Automatic scans can also be configured from this panel here and you can choose to close Ad-Aware after startup scan, or set it to initialize a full or smart scan when the application is launched. Ad-Aware 2008 proved to be a very pleasant surprise, as it comes with improved detection and scan capabilities and yet preserved the same ease of use users were accustomed with. All options are well defined and easy to manage while the set of tools offer the possibility to cover your Internet browsing tracks, handle running processes, or Hosts File. **The Good** Ad-Aware 2008 poses absolutely no problem when it comes to managing its options and ease of access to the features, regardless of the user's computer skills. The application provides comprehensive information on the state of the computer and options enabled, while scan options make available the necessary features to thoroughly verify the computer for malware. Automatic scanning is

ensured by the flexible scheduler that also works for retrieving the latest updates. **The Bad** The greatest downside of the application is the fact that all options are displayed in the interface, although many of them are restricted to Plus and Pro versions. There is no trial for the most feature-heavy of the versions, the Pro edition. **The Truth** Ad-Aware 2008 is a great companion to keeping spyware and adware out of your computer. The set of definitions is extensive and the scan engine has been greatly improved. It offers a great deal of features at an accessible price. System Restore function can pull you out of a jam and, in case something goes wrong, you can return to the previous system configuration with no problem. **NOTE:** In the meantime Ad-Aware has released trial versions for [Pro](#) and [Plus](#) versions as well, so the baddie mentioned before should be stricken out. Skip to [Ad-Aware 2008 Pro's Ad-Watch review](#)