

15 August 2010

By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews

Expert View interface
in BitDefender Total
Security 2011

[BitDefender Total Security 2011](#)

BitDefender 2011 product line has just launched, and the developer announces hefty improvements to the modules that maintained your PC secure in the previous edition, as well as new features to increase protection and turn handling the applications into less of a challenge for all types of users.

[Total Security](#) is the most complex protection suite from BitDefender, encompassing all security features the company makes available for the PC user and more. User profiling during the installation procedure has been much simplified and reduced only to selecting one of the three view types you want the application to load at first launch (you can toggle between basic, intermediate and expert view later on from the application window).

Before the actual installation deploys Total Security needs to run a quick security scan just to make sure that there is no active malware to tamper with the procedure.

Before moving any further you need to know that BitDefender offers free upgrade to its 2011 product line to users of any of the 2010 editions. This basically means that you can use your Total Security 2010 key to register the 2011 release.

Also, there is one installation kit (weighing 245MB) that encompasses all three paid PC security products provided by the company: Antivirus Plus, Internet Security and Total Security. It's the license key you provide that makes the difference between the products you want to install.

If you have a previous version installed, it will be first removed from the system (restart required) and only then the 2011 edition is added. Signing in with your BitDefender account in the next screen is an absolute must if you want to continue using the suite after the 30-day trial period (this comes as a downfall given that the license has been previously validated).

Initial configuration of the application depends on the type of view you'd like to interact with after installation completes. Thus, if you go with Expert view you get to decide on the modules and features you want to be enabled, while selecting Intermediate or Basic gives you the possibility to customize the Dashboard (main application window) with shortcuts to features like Game mode, Parental Control and Home Network Management.

While you figure out the configuration steps to suit your own interest, Total Security will silently run all installation routines. This is given away by the pop ups like those informing you that Windows Defender and Firewall have been disabled (if you opted for this).

At the end of all this you can instruct the suite to run a full system scan in order to eliminate any malware suspicion. And while this takes place, further configuration occurs to establish the network connection type.

For access to all the features and functions of the application Expert View is the choice. This interface gives you full control over the suite and its modules: antivirus, antispyware, parental control, privacy control, firewall, vulnerability, backup, encryption, tune-up, home network and game/laptop mode. Each of them come with wide customization possibilities to turn the suite your way.

With Intermediate View the Dashboard gives you access to security module, system maintenance tools, backup and encryption instruments and Home Network. The level of control over these modules is lower, but in accordance to the needs of the type of user it addresses.

The least comprehensive management over the application is available in Basic View. By default, control over the modules is minimum and only the essentials are present in this interface: scanning, a few system tune-up instruments and some tools such as backup and restore are available, as well as the possibility to activate game and laptop modes or run a quick scan (which is also present under Security menu).

Even if by default they come with diminished management possibilities, both Intermediate and Basic dashboards can be configured to expand control. This is part of the benefits of the adaptive design BitDefender introduced in its products and improved in the 2011 edition.

Antivirus

This module brings a new layer of security, besides the now standard protection against all sorts of malware (signature based detection and heuristics) and elimination of phishing attacks (antiphishing toolbar still gets installed automatically in Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox). Search Advisor has been introduced in this edition of the suite as a means to counterattack infections via shady websites.

Starting with this version BitDefender Total Security can scan your search results in Yahoo!, Bing and Google and mark those with compromised security integrity. Search Advisor is based on the same technology used by antiphishing and anti-fraud engines and is designed to check if the links returned by the search engine are safe or not.

To ensure maximum efficiency the results are verified against a database of signatures but the code is also analyzed. However, this may affect your browsing speed, as during our tests we noticed that the safety marks would load progressively, with the first result being verified in about two seconds.

The benefits of cloud antivirus are no secret. Besides taking the load off the user's station there is also the advantage of faster scan results. In BitDefender products it is called QuickScan and it does contribute to turning down a notch the impact on system resources and the time required for a full of system scan to complete.

Testing the efficiency of the improved malware protection, showed that the standard has not been lowered in this version. We put the engine against a database of 300 of the worst

threats we could find back in July and the results were pretty good as only 11 items managed to evade its vigilance.

However, we continued with a fresher database encompassing some of the worst threats we collected through August and the results were again good. Out of the 38 malicious elements 30 of them got nabbed by the engine, leaving 8 threats behind.

Parental Control

The same options are available in this module as in the previous version. However now you have the possibility to view and configure your kid's activity remotely, from any web access point through an online parental control management console. You need to log into your [BitDefender account](#) and you have instant access to alerts, recent activity and a settings area.

It offers the same flexibility you are accustomed to in the program, from blocking websites and applications to defining Internet access schedules. Statistics with most accessed web pages, as well as most used applications and contacts in instant messaging programs (Yahoo! Messenger and Windows Live Messenger) are available. The effects of the settings in this online console, however, are not instant. It takes a while for the information to be sent to the suite installed on your machine and enforce the restrictions.

System Tune-Up

This time around, the PC performance improving module in Total Security offers a new instrument to maintain the system at its best behavior. "Monitor" section in the menu provides ample statistics about each application currently running on your computer and calculates its average CPU and RAM usage and labels its resource usage as Low, Medium or High.

Based on this information you can easily decide which of the apps is causing performance drag on the system and choose to close it. More than this, Total Security makes available a 30-minute CPU and RAM usage history for each of the elements displayed.

An improvement added to the module is the fact that during the PC Clean-Up process you now have the advantage of selecting the elements that should be cleaned. This basically translates into the possibility of choosing if you want IE or Firefox cache to be purged or if the list of recent and temporary documents should be cleaned up.

Home Network

As the number of computers in a household keeps increasing, the need for a console to manage the security of all stations also keeps growing. With BitDefender Total Security you have the possibility to administer BitDefender products installed on different stations inside the network.

The list of activities you can engage in remotely comprises of registering the product, running on-demand scan (full scan, deep scan or verifying My Documents folder), initiate a fix-all-issues routine, begin the update process, set a specific parental control profile or run a tune-up task. As soon as you add the computer to BitDefender Home Network and all the passwords verify, you are good to go.

[BitDefender Total Security 2011](#) is not exactly a suite for the weak-hearted if you choose Expert View. But it can adjust its interface to the level of computer knowledge of the user. Its learning curve is not at all difficult, especially with the introduction of the new support feature which sports flash videos thoroughly explaining the steps as plainly as possible.

The list of tutorials covers subjects from creating a BitDefender account to more complicated stuff like removing infected files from System Volume Information folder or adding exclusions in the Active Virus Control module. Internet connection is required to view the clips.

Apart from the improvements and the new features available in this edition, the suite maintains the high standards of the previous version. Thus the firewall will not leave you uncovered and data coming in or going out will still be filtered; Vulnerability module will still keep an eye wide open for the system to have the latest updates installed and applications on the system to be in their latest version. Also, privacy control is on guard against identity theft, Trojans trying to fit in Windows Registry, tracking cookies or scripts from gaining access to your data.

As good as all this sounds, we had our share of trouble tinkering with BitDefender Total Security and we could not test the Antispam module. We tried it in Outlook 2010 and Mozilla Thunderbird (both the portable and the desktop versions) but the result was the same: no email was filtered. The trouble may be on our end, but we also contacted BitDefender for instructions to make it work. They assured us that the issue will be investigated and come back with an answer.

The Good

BitDefender Total Security 2011 comes off as a reliable suite that addresses any sort of user, regardless of their computer knowledge level. Its interface can be adjusted to multiple degrees of control even in Basic and Intermediate view by customizing the number of shortcuts in the main menus.

System resource usage is kept within acceptable parameters; during our tests it required about 80MB for scan tasks while CPU usage averaged between 50%-60%.

Smart Schedule feature allows you to run scan jobs when computer is idle, and pauses as soon as it is used again. On the same note, scan times are lower thanks to QuickScan and the fact that the engine does not scan known operating system files.

The Bad

Search Advisor does a fine job, but it takes a while to load the safety marks for the displayed results. Also, firewall pop-ups were quite frequent and we received multiple messages about adding a rule for the same application that tried to connect to the Internet, despite the fact that each time we gave full access to the process.

During our scans it happened for the application to require analysis of files belonging to clean applications. The portable version of Gimp is the example we were confronted with.

The Truth

The improvements available in the new BitDefender Total Security are not at all negligible. Scanning in the cloud, selective file scanning when the data is known as being clean, online parental control console or verification of search results in Google, Yahoo! and Bing represent an important progress in the evolution of the suite.

Despite the problems we bumped into during our testing the application showed better quality on almost all fronts (we still have to test the Antispam module). From the way it treats beginners, to the options made available to advanced users and the overall level of protection it offers, BitDefender Total Security sets a new standard.

[BitDefender Total Security 2010](#)

This article is also available in Spanish: [BitDefender Total Security 2011](#)