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Softpedia Goes Freeware Only - Part I: The Basics

What any user should have and know how to install

Let's say you've just bought a brand-new computer with Windows XP, but you don't have any money left to buy additional software. Windows tries to offer its users most of the applications they would usually need, but the ones included are not enough. In these cases, the best solution is the use of freeware software. A lot of people think that 'free' means a lack of quality, but we're here to prove that in most cases that's completely wrong. The best way to start would be with applications that any computer needs. And your computer would need protection against viruses, worms and other types of malware. For home users, the solution is: [Avast! Home Edition](#). With a very powerful engine and weekly [updated virus definitions](#), Avast! will surely take care of any virus attacks. For commercial environments, there isn't an antivirus solution available, but there are many other highly reliable virus removal applications, such as: [McAfee AVERT Stinger](#), [Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool](#), [avast! Virus Cleaner](#), [Microworld Antivirus Toolkit Utility](#), etc. Now that you're protected, let's take a look at your options for office applications. The suite that can replace Microsoft Office and will cover most of your needs is, of course, [OpenOffice](#). If all you need is a more advanced text editor, then you can try programs like [Portable Abiword](#) or [ConTEXT](#). Nowadays, documents are not always sent in a text format, but also as PDFs. And what better way to view a PDF file if not [Adobe Reader](#)? Office files, among many other file types, can occupy a lot of drive space. The problem of large files can be solved with the use of compression utilities. The freeware archivers that Softpedia recommends are: [ZipGenius](#), [TUGZip](#) and [7-Zip](#). Now, let's pass on to the multimedia section, starting with video files. To view such a file, you would need a player and sometimes a codec or codec pack. The freeware video players that Softpedia recommends are [MV2 Player](#) (perfect for avi, mpg, wmv, asf, divx files) and [Media Player Classic](#) (a very good alternative to MV2 and probably the best freeware player for DVDs). If you want to preview an incomplete avi file there are also some freeware alternatives: [VideoLan Client](#) (a powerful video player, the only one with a video preview feature) or [AVI Preview](#). Some video files cannot be played without a preinstalled codec. You can either install the most important codecs ([DivX](#), [XviD](#)) or install codec packs ([K-Lite Mega Codec Pack](#), [Codec Pack All in 1](#), [X Codec Pack](#)) that include all the codecs you need. Next in line are audio files. A freeware audio player used world-wide is [Winamp](#), but, of course, there are some alternatives like [foobar](#), [Quintessential](#) or [XMPlay](#). As for graphic files, [FastStone Image Viewer](#), [XnView](#), [FuturixImager](#), [IrfanView](#), [ForceVision](#) are all very good image viewers and also offer more than the basic image manipulation operations. Please note that some of them are not available for commercial use. While these applications are necessary on any computer, it's quite clear that a PC with Internet access needs other programs too. Fortunately, the best options in this category are also free, so let's take a look. To surf websites you need a web browser. The freeware browsers that use the IE engine and we recommend are: [Maxthon](#), [Avant Browser](#), [Acoo Browser](#). The two alternatives that don't use the Internet Explorer engine are: [Mozilla Firefox](#) and [Opera](#). Surfing the Internet has its risks. You might download and install programs that contain spyware and a lot of disk space will be occupied by temporary internet files or history files. To solve these problems, you should install applications that will remove the harmful or useless files from your computer. Please be advised that some of these applications will require a higher degree of knowledge from their users than the programs mentioned until now. To prevent installation of spyware components or detect and remove them, we recommend our users to install at least one of the following antispware applications: [Ad-aware Personal](#) (for home users only), [Microsoft](#)

[Windows Defender](#) and [SpyBot - Search & Destroy](#). To find and remove the useless files on your computer, the best freeware application is [CCleaner](#), but we also recommend other programs such as [HDCleaner](#), [CleanCache](#) and [CleanMOCache](#). For now, these are the applications we consider to be the minimum required on any computer and don't ask for any IT knowledge from their users. In the following article we will take a look at the freeware alternatives for users which possess medium or advanced knowledge on how to use a PC.