

# Is Microsoft Defender Enough?

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## Microsoft Defender

### What is Microsoft Defender?

Microsoft Defender (previously Windows Defender) is a security application that is included with Windows 10 and 11.

### Is Defender free?

Technically yes - Defender is included with Windows 10 and 11 (which is usually included in the price of your computer).

### What are the upsides of Defender?

- It provides solid protection against viruses and malware.
- It is generally unobtrusive and doesn't slow down your system.
- It is active by default on Windows 10/11 computers - you may already be using it!
- It is provided and funded by Microsoft, so it isn't likely to disappear, lose support, or suddenly become a paid-only or ad-supported product.

### What are the downsides of Defender?

- It isn't as easily configurable as other security tools - not ideal for those who like to tinker.
- It doesn't provide some secondary protections (phishing protection, extra browser support) that some third-party tools offer.
- It's only available for Windows.

### How can I make sure Defender is enabled?

1. Open the Windows Security app (click Start, type "Security", and click Windows Security).
2. Look for the green checkmark over the blue shield near the middle of the window (just above the words "Virus & threat protection").

### How can I start a virus scan with Defender?

1. Open the Windows Security app (click Start, type "Security", and click Windows Security).
2. Click "Virus & threat protection" (the shield icon on the left menu bar).
3. Click Quick Scan.

## Defender alternatives

[Avast One Basic](#) and [AVG AntiVirus Free](#) are both solid alternatives to Microsoft Defender for people who want more control over their security application. They also offer additional protection options, but may try to encourage users into upgrading to paid plans unnecessarily.

## What about paid security software?

While paid software such as BitDefender, Norton, and McAfee are reliable options, they do not perform much better in lab testing than the free options listed above. Their main advantage is that they provide support by phone or email - if that is a consideration for you, it may be worthwhile!

## What does Zach use?

I use Microsoft Defender on my personal Windows systems - I find that when combined with a healthy skepticism about any strange emails or websites I find, it's more than sufficient for my needs.

## What should I use?

- If you use any of the security applications I've mentioned (Avast, AVG, BitDefender, Norton, or McAfee) and are comfortable with it, that's great - stick with what you know!
- If you don't know what to use or are looking to change from your current security application, try Microsoft Defender.

## Sources

- <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-defender-for-individuals>
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- <https://www.pcmag.com/reviews/avast-one-essential>
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