

FREE SOFTWARE

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FREE ALTERNATIVES TO PRICEY SOFTWARE

SPICEBIRD

E-MAIL IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PROGRAMS YOU CAN HAVE.

It easily handles your e-mail. But it also organizes your contacts, calendar and to-do list.

It can also manage most instant messaging programs, like AIM, Yahoo Messenger and Google Talk. This makes collaboration with others a breeze.

Cost: Free

Link: www.spicebird.com

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7

MICROSOFT OFFICE STARTS AT \$150.00 – OPEN OFFICE IS FREE!

This program is a free suite of office products.

It includes word processing, spreadsheet, presentation and drawing programs. You can open and save in a variety of popular formats -- Microsoft Office, PDF, HTML, and others.

OpenOffice.org has the same look and feel as Microsoft Office, so there's no big learning curve. It's a big file, so downloading it may take some time if you're on a dialup connection.

Cost: Free

Link: download.openoffice.org

Quit Quicken- Save \$40 - USE [GnuCash](#) INSTEAD

GnuCash is a powerful personal finance program. It can handle nearly any financial transaction you can think of. Then it can tie it all together into detailed reports. This program can give you a real picture of your financial situation.

Cost: Free

Link: www.gnucash.org

System: Windows XP and Vista

**Illustrator or CorelDRAW (Save \$600 and \$430) – Use
INKSCAPE**

Any aspiring graphic designer or illustrator should have a program like Illustrator or CorelDraw. Unfortunately, their prices are too high for many people.

Well, Inkscape is a free competitor to programs like Illustrator. So, you can unleash your creative side without cracking open your wallet!

Cost: Free

Link: www.inkscape.org

PHOTOSHOP – SAVE \$400 – USE GIMP INSTEAD

Try GIMP. It's a free image-editing program. It has an impressive set of tools that can handle nearly any editing task.

Like Photoshop, GIMP is complex. It has a steep learning curve. In fact, it may be too much for a beginner. But if you've found other programs lacking, this is what you want.

Cost: Free

Link: www.gimp.org

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7, Mac OS X

ITUNES IS FREE BUT SO IS SONGBIRD

iTunes is a great program. If you have an iPod or iPhone, it's the one for you.

But there are other phones and MP3 players out there. iTunes does not support them.

Songbird comes in. It works with almost any MP3 player. It also handles smartphones like the Palm Pre and Motorola Droid. And it looks and feels like iTunes. So, you're already used to it.

Using all of these alternatives could save you \$1,600 or more. Not bad.

Cost: Free

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7, Mac OS X

PhotoJoy dusts off those precious memories. It makes your photos a fun part of using your computer. It features custom wallpapers, screensavers and desktop widgets. All of them use your photos.

Each element automatically rotates through your photos. Whenever you see your desktop or screensaver, you'll see something new. This is a great way to put those old photos to work.

Cost: Free XP, VISTA AND WINDOWS 7

Link: www.photojoy.com

Does your monitor have dead pixels?

You can have dead pixels. These can look like black or off-color dots. Or you can have stuck pixels. These display a single color all the time. These are also technically dead. They're just a special kind of dead.

Dead Pixel Tester will help you discover them all. Easy to follow instructions will help you do it.

Hopefully, you don't find any. If you do, you have a problem. There is no reliable way to repair dead pixels. But your warranty likely covers dead pixels. Most manufacturers will replace your monitor free of charge.

Cost: Free

Link: www.dataproductservices.com/dpt

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7

Web browser, e-mail client, HTML editor and more

SeaMonkey is a great all-in-one tool. It's a Web browser built on code similar to that running Firefox. It also integrates an e-mail client, RSS (newspapers) reader and chat program. The program also doubles as a quality HTML editor. You can surf and build sites in one program. It's a great way to get everything you need.

Cost: Free

Link: www.seamonkey-project.org

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7, Mac OS X

Opt out of online ad tracking

The [NAI opt-out page](#) is easy to use. You'll see a list of ad networks. You'll also see whether you have their tracking cookie installed. Of the 17 networks represented, I had 10 active tracking cookies.

There is an opt-out checkbox next to each network. Don't bother clicking on each. Just click the "Select all" button above the list. Then click Submit.

THE MISUNDERSTOOD COOKIE

Can hackers get your computer through cookies?

Cookies do not allow hackers to access your computer. They are ordinary text files stored on your hard drive.

Like your other files, they are protected by your computer's security. Software bugs and weak security are the real culprits.

Cookies allow Web sites to be interactive. As text files, cookies provide the means for Web pages within the same site to pass notes to each other. Otherwise, any selections you make on one page are forgotten as soon as you click to another page.

GET OFF FACEBOOK

Log in to your Facebook profile. In the upper-right corner, select My Account>>Account Settings.

At the bottom of the page is the Deactivate Account section. Click the Deactivate button. Follow the instructions. If you don't sign in for 14 days, it will be deleted.

Miss a TV show? Watch it on the Web

WWW.FLICKER.COM

Type in a show and click Find. It will comb through several online TV sites. You will get a list of places to view the show.

Or you can look for new shows to watch. Browse through titles or categories. You can even set up a playlist for later viewing.

Note that some of the content may require payment such any content hosted by Amazon or Netflix. Recently aired shows usually have a free option, like Hulu.

An Internet weather map

Weather Underground combined a Google map with its weather station information. This resulted in Full Screen Weather. Current temperature and weather patterns are overlaid on a map.

You can find the temperature in your region of a city. Or precipitation and cloud cover. It also includes all the usual weather information, including a forecast.

fullscreenweather.com

Download and switch wallpapers automatically

Try Wallpaper Juggler. This program will automatically switch wallpapers on a schedule. Have it switch every 30 minutes to every 12 hours. And it can pull wallpapers from any folder on your computer. It can also automatically download new, high-quality wallpapers off the Web. Enabling this is pretty cool. You'll never know exactly what you'll get. It could be a stunning photograph or a silly cartoon. You'll always be surprised.

Cost: Free

Link: juggler.codeplex.com

System: Windows XP, Vista and 7

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Anyone can participate.

The selection is pretty diverse, and expanding. There is also a section for kids called Wikijunior. A cookbook area is also included.

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page