

from Bob Rankin    What's New in MSE2?

MSE is a free all-in-one Internet security tool you can [download](#) from [Microsoft](#). Installation takes about four minutes, a bit long compared to some competing programs but not bad for a free program. During installation you will have the options to enable [Windows](#) Firewall, use a third-party firewall, or skip firewall protection (bad idea). You can also opt in or stay out of Microsoft SpyNet, the real-time malware information database mentioned above.



SpyNet consists of computers running Microsoft [operating systems](#) and MSE. When threats are found on member computers, anonymous information about the threat, its origin, the user's response to it, and the result of the attempted countermeasure are reported to Microsoft. This data helps develop countermeasures to new threats as they appear, and the results benefit all SpyNet members. Microsoft promises to keep your data private, but you don't have to opt into SpyNet if you don't believe it.

MSE also uses the standard malware-signature database method of detecting viruses and spyware. It can be set to download updated signature [databases](#) automatically or manually. MSE 2 introduces integration with Internet Explorer to scan files as they are downloaded through that browser (no such cooperation with Firefox or other browsers, unfortunately). Windows Vista and [Windows 7](#) users can scan their network resources for malware using MSE 2.

The Settings tab in MSE 2's interface lets you do a Quick Scan, Full Scan, or Custom Scan in which you specify what drive(s), folder(s), and file(s) should be scanned. There are also tabs for viewing History logs of detected threats; setting Advanced options such as [scanning](#) of archived files; creating a System Restore Point; and letting all users of a machine view the History logs.

## MSE Performance and Certification

The performance of your [computer](#) will decrease a bit with MSE 2 running, as it will with any extra load imposed by security [software](#). Expect boot-up and shutdown to take a few seconds longer. Decoding of media files will also slow about 3 per cent, and other processor-intensive operations may be a bit more sluggish. MSE 2 is about in the middle on resource consumption as anti-malware programs go.

AV-Test.org, a certification lab for anti-malware programs, gave MSE V1 a test run in the second quarter of 2010, but has not tested MSE V2. In that test, MSE on Windows 7 earned certification with a 15 out of 18 score. It achieved 4 out of 6 on Protection, 4.5 out of 5 in Repair, and 5.5 out of 6 in Usability. A minimum score of 12 is required for certification. MSE V1 on Windows XP did not earn the AV-Test certification, but it did

get an Advanced+ certification from AV-Comparatives.org, another independent testing lab.

Bottom line: MSE 2 is a worthwhile contribution to the anti-malware landscape. Indications from my own testing on Windows XP and Windows 7 PCs, as well as feedback from my network of Very Smart Friends, tell me that it provides excellent protection, and can be relied upon as an alternative to the competing free and paid security suites.