

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month I'd like to answer a question about free computer utilities. The question is: "Are these free utilities worth getting?"

First I'd like to say is to remember that these utilities are free so I would not expect them too much from them. An example of this is the free virus detection programs available on the internet. Yes, they all can detect viruses and probably will be able to detect a virus that has infected your computer. Almost all of them will not be able to remove the virus, this function is reserved for a retail version of the program which you'll probably be prompted to buy if a virus is detected. Another example is the free firewalls available. While they do work and do provide basic services, it is the retail versions that are more feature rich. Zone Labs makes a very good free version of the Zone Alarm firewall. Their Zone Alarm Pro version builds on the free version and adds some other functions that make it worth buying.

There are a number of good utilities for graphics and photos that you may want to look into if you have the need. Sometimes you'll receive some of these programs with the electronic devices you buy. Digital camera and scanners usually come with a basic or lite version of these utilities. And they may be all that you'll ever need.

One thing for sure when downloading and installing these free utilities is to make sure that they don't contain spyware or adware. You can have an active anti-spyware program running in the background while you're installing the software. Even if nothing shows up during the install, I would still run a spyware sweep just to make sure nothing extra was loaded.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is [meggert@wi.rr.com](mailto:meggert@wi.rr.com), my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.