

## Firewalls

To protect your computer, you need a firewall. This is one of the most important things you can do to protect your computer if you connect to the Internet. You need a firewall regardless of the operating system you use. Windows 95/98/ME, Windows XP, Windows Server 2000/2003, Linux as well as any of the other unnamed operating systems.

Years ago, the only people who used firewalls were banks, businesses, and government facilities. Today having a good firewall is almost as important as having anti-virus protection.

A firewall is a security measure that protects a computer or a computer network from unauthorized access. It can be software, hardware, or a combination of both. A good firewall will prevent hackers from accessing a computer. It will also keep information from being sent out from your computer without your knowledge. Firewalls *don't* prevent virus attacks.

If you use a broadband connection to the Internet, like DSL or cable, you should definitely get a firewall as the connection may always be on. A good firewall will alert you when a transfer of information that you have not initiated tries to take place, preventing things like spyware and adware from completing their devious tasks.

The easiest way to get a firewall for your computer is to use a software program that you install just like any other program. Most software firewalls prevent unauthorized information from going out of your computer as well as from going in. You will, however, have to check before you obtain the firewall software to make sure that it is this type of two-directional firewall.

Remember even with a firewall you can still get infected by viruses, spyware and adware. See the [virtual riders resources security page](#).

Hardware firewalls are becoming increasingly common and often are built into your broadband router. Basically a hardware firewall is a box (it can even be a computer) that sits between your computer or network and the internet. So when something nasty tries to break in (or something you don't want tries to go out), it is blocked.

The following are some of the commonly used firewalls:

[Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall](#)

*This is part of Windows XP and it stops inbound traffic. It gives no warnings or notices when something is stopped. Another drawback is it does nothing to stop outbound traffic.*

[ZoneAlarm](#)

*Reliable and popular with a free personal version.*

[Norton Firewall](#)

*Comes in a variety of Norton internet security packages. Cheap for charities (see funding links in the management section of the Virtual Riders website)*

[EZ Armor Security Suite from Computer Associates](#)

*Free for the first year for household use*

[Kerio Personal Firewall](#)

*There is a free version available for home and personal use.*

[Macafee](#)

*also produce a personal firewall product*

[Ashampoo Firewall](#)

*Free or very low cost.*

For a review of products, check here:

<http://www.firewallleaktester.com/tests.php>

or:

<http://www.informationweek.com/software/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=192201247>

For a more technical explanation see:

<http://www.ictubknowledgebase.org.uk/firewalls>

or for help call [Virtual Riders](#).