Downloading Software from the Internet

The Internet is a great resource for many things, including software. There are a lot of good (and a lot of bad) programs available for download. This guide will tell you about different ways to download software, types of software to download, provide links to some great download sites, give you some tips to make downloads more efficient and successful, and how to download safely.

FREEWARE

Freeware is software that is, as the name says, absolutely free. You can download it, install it and use it indefinitely. The authors are usually people who have programming experience, either through their day job or just as a hobby, and write programs they think might be useful. They do it for the fun and don't expect any compensation for it, a very noble attitude that cannot be appreciated enough. Because it is free, you should be realistic. Some freeware is a very amateurish attempt at programming and you end up with a buggy piece of code you wish you never installed, some other freeware is amazingly good and you can't believe that it is free.

SHAREWARE

Shareware is software that is available for free download and allows you to use it for a certain time period after which you are expected to either register it with the owner and pay a small amount to buy a license for unlimited use, or, if you decide you don't like it or don't need it, remove it from your PC. Some shareware relies on the honour system and expects that you contact the owner voluntarily after the evaluation period is up, other applications will disable itself after the evaluation period is over. Once disabled after the evaluation period, it may be unlocked with a valid license or registration number you have purchased from the vendor.

TRY AND BUY

Try and buy is software from a professional software vendor that you can download from their web site after purchasing it with a credit card online. This way you don't have to go to the store or wait for the product to be shipped to you. Usually you download the software and then get a separate e-mail with a license or registration number after your credit card information was verified.

WAREZ

This is a slang term and means pirated software. Warez are illegal! Often warez is illegally manipulated programs from professional vendors. This is illegal as the owner of the software never sees a penny for it, not to mention a direct copyright infringement.

If you ever visit a site that offers free software from vendors that you know you have to pay for, write down the URL for the site and then send an e-mail to a few of the vendors whose software was available for free on that warez site. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Why would anybody give away free copies of Microsoft Office if you normally have to pay several hundred Rand for it in the store? Another good reason never to download anything from these sites is that often warez software applications are infested with viruses and serve as a tool to spread them over the Internet.

Before you start downloading programs like crazy please continue reading.

SAFE DOWNLOADING

Please be cautious where you download software from. Make sure that the site you download from is reputable. As mentioned earlier, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Don't take risks. You don't want to lose your data to a virus or an erased hard drive. Be sure to have a good up-to-date anti-virus program installed and running before downloading software from the Internet. A good Anti Virus system can often provide an indication whether the page you are visiting is reputable.

Beware of links that pop up telling you have a virus and to click here to resolve it. If it is not your anti-virus reporting it, the chances are; it is a scam. Do not purchase the repair program online. If you are looking for software to perform a particular business function do not always believe what you see. As an example if it is available on a page that offers the download however the page contains links to dating sites or even adult related material, be very aware, it will more than likely be risky.

As good method is to simply Google the product first, read what others say about it. Do not visit one page but many; attempt to find blogs that others in the world have written comments on. This process will soon enough explain or display whether the application you wish to download is feasible and safe.

ORGANIZED DOWNLOADING

Being organized is crucial to safe and successful downloading from the Internet. Before downloading; you should open Windows Explorer and think about where you want to save the file(s). A great way to keep track of things is by creating a folder called Downloads somewhere on your hard drive. Then create subfolders, e.g. Applications, Business, Drivers, etc. Please note that all newer operating systems already offer a "Downloads" folder.

Inside those folders create appropriate subfolders such as the name of the program, the vendor or the device the driver is for. Then be sure to save each downloaded file in the appropriate folder.
If you don't do this, you'll run into several problems.

If you don't make a note of where you put the file when beginning the download, chances are you have forgotten the location by the time the download is finished and have a difficult time finding the file. Often downloads can be very large, be sure to back them up occasionally to ensure that you will not need to re-download the software again.

When downloading drivers for your computer, it is highly advisable to download from the manufacturers web pages. As an example if you have a HP printer, visit www.hp.com to obtain the driver; do not trust other web pages.

KEEP A COOL HEAD

Downloads can consume a whole host of bandwidth, take note of how much you are downloading. If you have a capped internet solution downloading has the potential to consume your cap very quickly. Be selective, read reviews, do not rush into any downloads.

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There are applications available for virtually any requirement, research, review then download in that order.

Written by: Brian Smith, Managing Director, IN 2 IT