

The ultimate utilities list: Windows 10 Edition

By Tracey Capen on December 19, 2016 in Best Utilities, Top Story, Windows Secrets

The essential utilities for Win10

When we set up a new PC, here are the first utilities we install or set up.

- Win10's built-in **Defender** (free) at a minimum; or install the third-party anti-malware application of your choice. See [AV-Test](#) and [AV-Comparatives](#) for recent AV test results.
- **Alternate browser** (free): Win10's new Edge browser is more secure than Internet Explorer, but it's still getting a high number of security fixes. And it's still well behind Chrome, Firefox, and other third-party browsers in usability, flexibility, and security.
- [Dropbox](#) (free/paid): Although Microsoft's OneDrive is included with Win10, Dropbox is still the better app/service for cloud storage, especially in a mixed vendor (Microsoft, Apple, Google, Linux, etc.) environment.
- [7-Zip](#) (free; file compression/encryption)
- **Password manager** (free/paid): As with AV products, there's a wealth of good password-keeper choices; see the list below for a few of the most popular.
- **Win10's backup and restore** (free): Windows 10 includes a comprehensive and easy-to-use set of data-protection tools. For example, if you have not set up File History, you should do so soon. For more info, see the Oct. 15, 2015, [Top Story](#), "Best of breed: Win10's hybrid backup system." And check out the list of third-party alternatives below.
- VideoLAN [VLC media player](#) (free): Will play nearly any video format you're likely to see.
- [Notepad ++](#) (free; powerful Windows Notepad alternative)
- [VirtualBox](#) (free): For power users, the classic choice for creating virtual machines. It's relatively easy to use and supports a wide variety of guest operating systems.

Diagnostics and repair

Hard drive

- PassMark [DiskCheckup](#) (free/paid)
- Paragon [Drive Copy Pro](#) (paid)
- Paragon [Hard Disk Manager](#) (paid)
- EFD Software [HD Tune](#) (free/paid)
- Paragon [Alignment Tool](#) (paid)
- Paragon [Partition Manager](#) (free/paid)
- EaseUS [Partition Master](#) (free/paid)

Mobility

- Softpedia [CoreTemp](#) (free)
- Softpedia [MobileMeter](#) (free)
- [SpeedFan](#) (free)

Other

- Nirsoft [USBDeview](#) (free)

Entertainment

Imaging applications

- [Adobe CC Photography](#) (subscription): Lightroom and Photoshop for advanced photographers. Lightroom excellent for working with RAW images.
- [GIMP](#) (free)
- [Greenshot](#) (free; screen-capture tool)
- [Mp3tag](#) (free; music metatag editor)
- [Paint.NET](#) (free)
- [PhotoFiltre](#) (free)

General Utilities

- Mythicsoft [Agent Ransack](#) (free)
- [Free Screen Recorder](#) (free; screen-activity recorder)
- TechSmith [KeyFinder](#) (free/paid; product-key retrieval)

- LapLink [PCmover](#) (paid; system transfers)
- [Nitro Pro](#) (free trial/paid; PDF creator)
- [Pdfcrowd](#) (free/paid; webpage-to-PDF conversion)
- TechSmith [Snagit](#) (free trial/paid; screen capture)
- [TeamViewer](#) (free trial/paid; remote access/control)
- Jam [TreeSize Free](#) (free/paid)
- Oracle [VirtualBox](#) (free)

Security

Browser addons

- [NoScript](#) (free; Script blocker for Firefox)
- EFF [Privacy Badger](#) (Chrome and Firefox; free; helps block online tracking)

Encryption

- [Boxcryptor](#) (free/paid)
- [VeraCrypt](#) (free/paid; the sucesor to TrueCrypt)
- [7-Zip](#) (free)

Firewall checkers

- HackerWatch [Probe](#) (free)
- [ShieldsUP](#) (Gibson Research Corporation; free)

Networking

- [Wireshark](#) (free): Classic network sniffer.

On demand antivirus scanners

- ESET [Online Virus Scanner](#) (free)
- Trend Micro [HouseCall](#) (free)
- Windows 10 Defender Offline (free; built into Win10)

Online password checkers

- [How secure is my password?](#) (free)
- [How big is your haystack?](#) (Gibson Research Corporation; free)
- [Password Meter](#) (free)

Password recovery

- Use the ResetPassword [page](#) for your online MS account.

Password vaults

- AgileBits [1Password](#) (paid)
- [KeepPass](#) (free)
- [LastPass](#) (free/paid)
- Siber Systems [RoboForm](#) (free/paid)