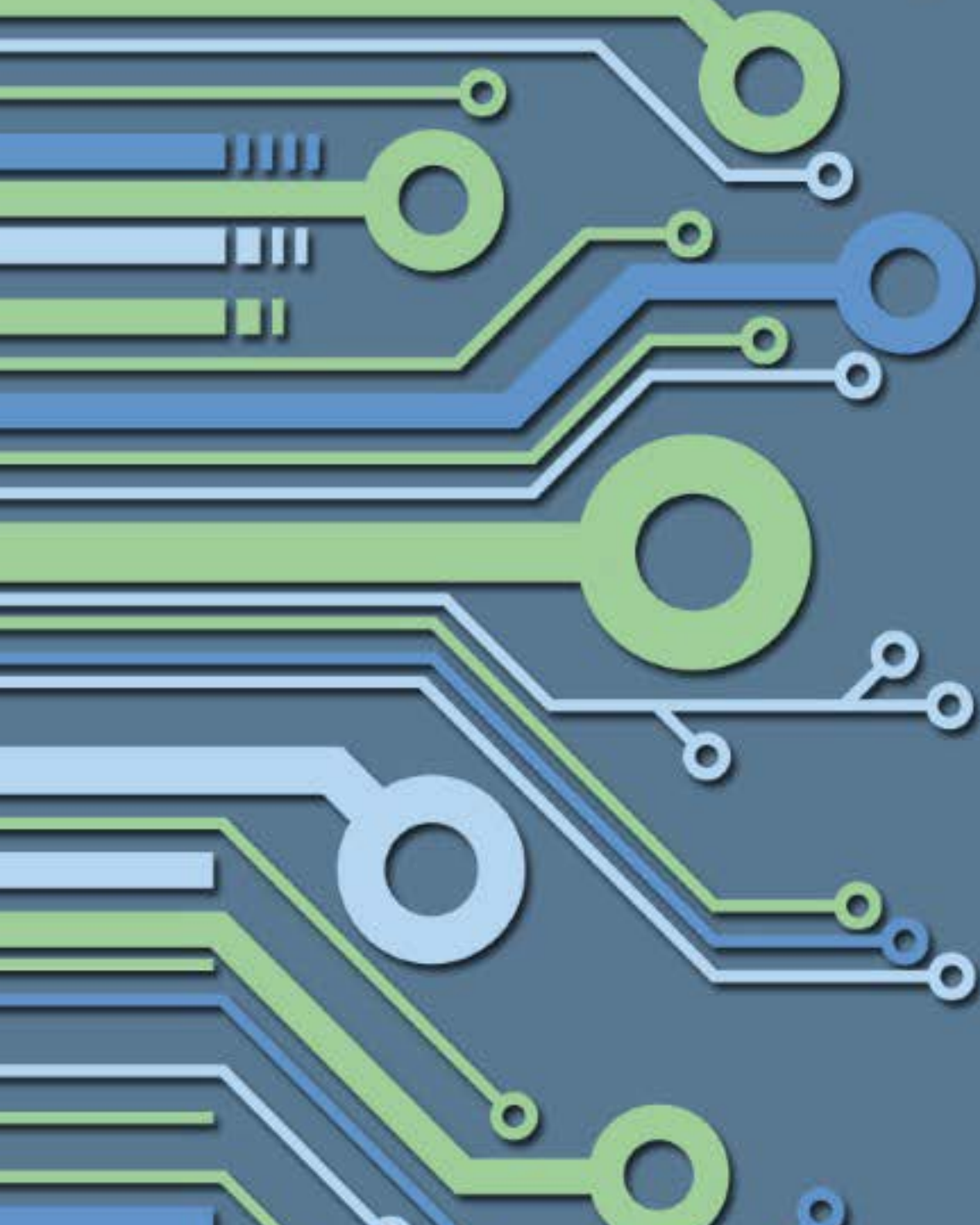




The Best Utility Programs & Their Use

Hillingdon U3A
Computer Club
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Utility Programs I Can Recommend

- Utility programs enhance Windows making it easier & more fun to use.
- The first list is not in any preference order but it does include some important programs that I believe to be of special interest.
- The list also has a description of each utility, and some have a link to the best site to download from.
- All the utilities listed here are free.

Useful Utilities:

- **ADOBE READER:** A Portable Document Format - PDF reader from Adobe that's been around since the 90's. Provides a document reader independent of application software, hardware, & O/S. <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
[**Foxit Reader:** A PDF alternative to Acrobat Reader but only install one of the two or you may get problems.]
- **VLC MEDIA PLAYER:** A cross platform multimedia player that plays everything, thought to be better than Windows Media Player.
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- **ZIP:** Compresses and un-compress files using an algorithm to reduce file size. First released 1989. Works on one or more files and folders. Can also include .exe files, useful if you want to attached this to an email. WINZIP, WINRAR, 7ZIP

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- **GOOGLE EARTH:** Provides a satellite view of locations around the globe.
 - **LIBRE OFFICE:** A free suite of office automation products that provide a realistic, effective and fully compatible alternative to the major components of MS Office 2010, 13, 16, 19 or Office 365
 - **THUNDERBIRD:** An email client program from Mozilla to use in place of the web based email interface for Gmail, Yahoo, etc., or client programs like Microsoft's Mail or Outlook, etc.

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- **CD BURNER XP**: A great alternative to the equivalent MS utility to burn DVDs, CDs and make an ISO image, etc.
 - **JAVA**: A programming language but also a way to run applications on any platform. Working on the 'Virtual Machine' concept, it allows for the creation of applets to run inside a browser. Versions come in 32 & 64 bit variants (you may need both)
 - **CLASSIC SHELL**: The desktop utility that has tamed the dreaded "mutant tiles" on both Windows 8.1 and Windows 10. It delivers a Windows 7 desktop GUI that can be customized.

Discontinued in 2017 but a stable version still available. New development now called Open Shell. <http://www.classicshell.net/>

Essential Utilities:

- **CCLEANER**: a free PC system optimization and cleaning tool bundled with a very good registry cleaner.
<https://www.ccleaner.com/ccleaner/download/standard>

Please be aware that Ccleaner, now owned by Avast, is being used as a 'Trojan Horse' by Avast to install Avast by stealth and/or to install & accept Chrome as your default browser.

- **MALWAREBYTES**: The best malware, website, exploit, ransomware, and rootkit detection product known! This is the one product that's worth buying the Premium version rather than just using the free version. Note that it's not an A/V product & therefore needs an installed A/V.

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- **AVAST FREE ANTIVIRUS:** A tool to protect your PC by scanning for security and performance issues and helping you to fix things instantly. It protects you in real-time by analysing unknown files before they get to you.

OR (but not both):

- **DEFENDER:** MS Windows anti-virus program is now tightly integrated with versions 1709, 1803, 1809 & 1903 of Windows 10. Defender provides a very powerful level of protection. It is preinstalled on all Windows 8.1 & 10 PCs since it is incorporated into the OS. Defender needs configuration activation.
- **GLARY UTILITIES:** A system maintenance tool that will analyse your PC for problems with: the registry, your shortcuts, temporary files, or in system startup.

Import Note:

To use Defender with Malwarebytes Premium ;

Go to Malwarebytes settings and under the Application tab scroll down to the Windows Action Centre and select "Never Register Malwarebytes in the Windows Action Centre" option.

If you don't do this, Windows 10 will configure Malwarebytes as your Antivirus and Defender will not run.

- **SPYBOT ANTI-BEACON:** Stops covert communications of private information from your PC back to Microsoft. Windows 10 privacy settings needs to be properly configured.

<https://www.safer-networking.org/spybot-anti-beacon/>

Other Useful Utilities:

- **SPYWAREBLASTER**: Prevents the installation of ActiveX based spyware and other potentially unwanted software such as adware and browser hijackers! It runs in the background but requires updating of definition files regularly.
- **PROCESS EXPLORER**: A very powerful Microsoft utility that you can think of as the "Process" component of "Task Manager " on Steroids. When used in administrator mode you can almost always shut down a process after all other attempts to shut it down have failed. Part of the MS Sysinternals Suite.

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- **CRYSTAL DISK INFO:** A disk utility for HDD, SSD and some types of USB sticks and supports S.M.A.R.T. If anything abnormal is detected during a scan, it will give you a report but not fix. Includes real time temps & can give an early warning of a potential disk failure.
 - **OPTIMIZE DRIVES:** A Microsoft utility that will detect the presence of a SSD and optimize rather than defrag the drive. Other programs have had problems with an inability to distinguish between HDDs & SSDs. Find it in Windows 10 in Programs/Windows Administrative Tools. Create a desktop icon to facilitate use.

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- **BELARC ADVISOR:** Creates a detailed profile of your PC's hardware and software configuration and includes info about security update status, and actual product keys for installed software components. Run it, Print it and save it for reference. Repeat each time you make significant hardware or software changes to your PC.
 - **REVO UNINSTALLER:** Removes unwanted programs and it's associated files, settings and registry entries that are almost always left over after you uninstall a program in Windows.

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- A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a vertical arrangement of stylized circuit lines and circular nodes in green and blue colors.
- **ADOBE FLASH PLAYER:** is required for your browser to manage audio/video playback.
 - **8GADGETPACK:** Want to use desktop Gadgets as you had in Windows 7 ? This installs 57 gadgets for you to use with Windows 8.1 and 10 such as Calendar, Clipboarder, Chameleon Weather & Clock.

Browser Extensions/Add-Ons:

- **Web of Trust (WOT)**: gives an indication of website safety when results of a search are displayed
- **uBlock Origin**: excellent ad blocker
- **Ghostery**: helps block ads and inhibits tracking of your online activity
- **HTTPS Everywhere**: encrypts communications with many major websites & makes browsing more secure. Works only with Firefox, Chrome, & Opera on Windows PCs, and with Firefox on Android devices.
- **Disable HTML5 Auto-play**: disables auto-play & preloading of HTML5 video & audio files
- **Malwarebytes Browser Extension**: Blocks malicious sites & content
- **No Coin**: Blocks coin miners from secretly using your PC for their own purposes

All will work with Firefox, Chrome & Opera. Some may not work on Edge & I.E.

11. Download from each browser's extension/addon store

My Favourites

- **Clover**: adds browser-like tabs to Windows Explorer smoothly, effectively, and seamlessly.
- **Gadwin PrintScreen Utility**: A screen capture program is a essential tool in my toolbox of utilities. A light and simple screenshot tool with configurable hotkeys for capturing the entire screen, a chosen window, or a screen selection and save.
- **4K Video Downloader**: Easy to use utility for downloading videos, playlists, channels and subtitles from YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo and other video sites in high quality.

My Favourites

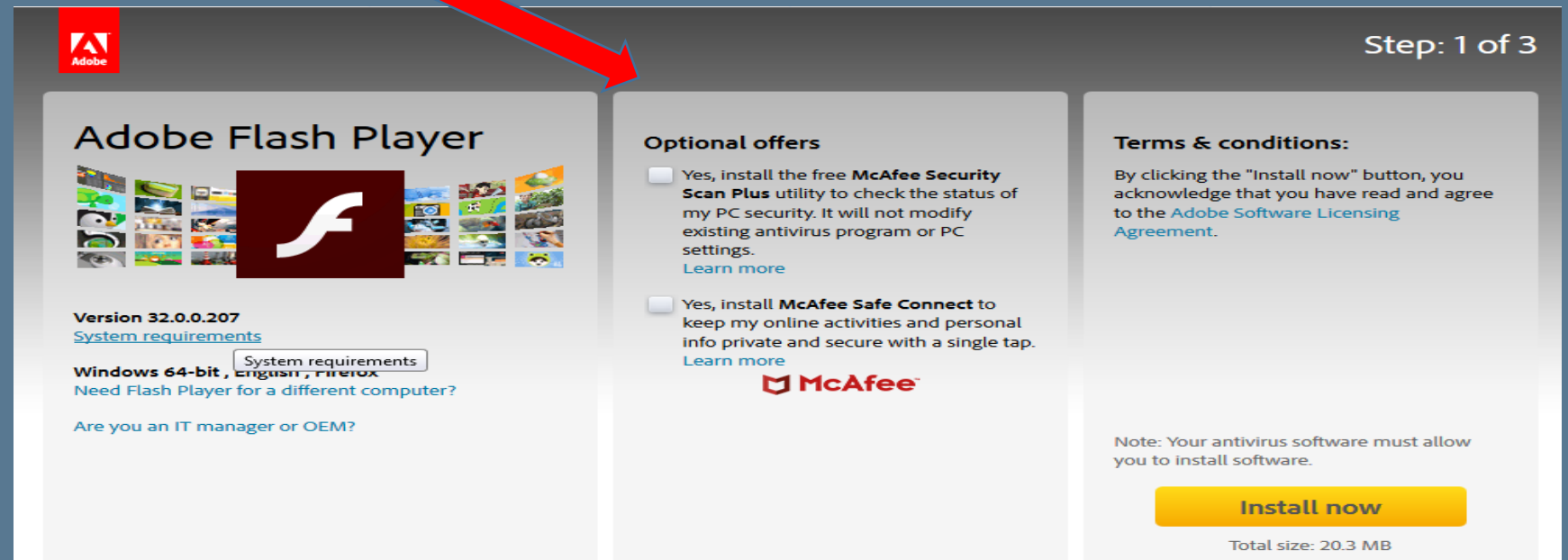
- **Faststone Image Viewer**: user-friendly image browser, converter and editor. It has a nice array of features that include image viewing, management, comparison, red-eye removal, emailing, resizing, cropping, retouching and color adjustments. Photoshop replacement for free.
- **Keepass**: A password manager that works on all OS's. Very secure using 256-bit cryptographic encryption. Organises, password quality meter, secure password suggestions.
- **SpaceSniffer**: Hard disk space analyser. Lets you understand how folders and files are structured on your disks. By using a treemap visualization layout, you have immediate perception of where big folders and files are placed on your devices.

My Favourites

- **Imgares** : Another easy to use utility, is a batch photo editor that allows you to reduce image size. Also allows you to rotate photos, add text to them and even make a slideshow in movie format.
- **Audacity**: is a free digital audio editor and recording application software. Great for converting old music on vinyl or cassette to mp3. Also has a full set of tools for editing audio files and adding effects.
- **Calibre e-Book Manager**: is a powerful and easy to use e-book manager. Calibre does for electronic books just what iTunes does for music, allowing you to manage your digital book collection through an intuitive interface. It supports almost every single e-Reader to read e-book formats such as epub, mobi, ibooks (Apple), azw (kindle) plus all the obvious - pdf, doc etc . Has it's own library.

Adobe Warning

Watch out for "Optional Offers" and make sure they are not selected.



The screenshot shows the Adobe Flash Player installation window. A red arrow points from the text 'Watch out for "Optional Offers"' to the 'Optional offers' section. The window is titled 'Step: 1 of 3' in the top right corner. The main section is 'Adobe Flash Player' with a version of 32.0.0.207. Below this, there are links for 'System requirements', 'Windows 64-bit', 'English', and 'Firefox'. There is also a link for 'Need Flash Player for a different computer?' and a question 'Are you an IT manager or OEM?'. The 'Optional offers' section has two checkboxes, both of which are unchecked. The first offer is for 'McAfee Security Scan Plus' and the second is for 'McAfee Safe Connect'. Both offers have a 'Learn more' link. The 'Terms & conditions' section states that by clicking the 'Install now' button, the user acknowledges that they have read and agree to the 'Adobe Software Licensing Agreement'. At the bottom right, there is a yellow 'Install now' button and a note that the total size is 20.3 MB.

Step: 1 of 3

Adobe Flash Player

Version 32.0.0.207
[System requirements](#)
Windows 64-bit, English, Firefox
[Need Flash Player for a different computer?](#)
[Are you an IT manager or OEM?](#)

Optional offers

- ☐ Yes, install the free **McAfee Security Scan Plus** utility to check the status of my PC security. It will not modify existing antivirus program or PC settings.
[Learn more](#)
- ☐ Yes, install **McAfee Safe Connect** to keep my online activities and personal info private and secure with a single tap.
[Learn more](#)

McAfee

Terms & conditions:

By clicking the "Install now" button, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to the [Adobe Software Licensing Agreement](#).

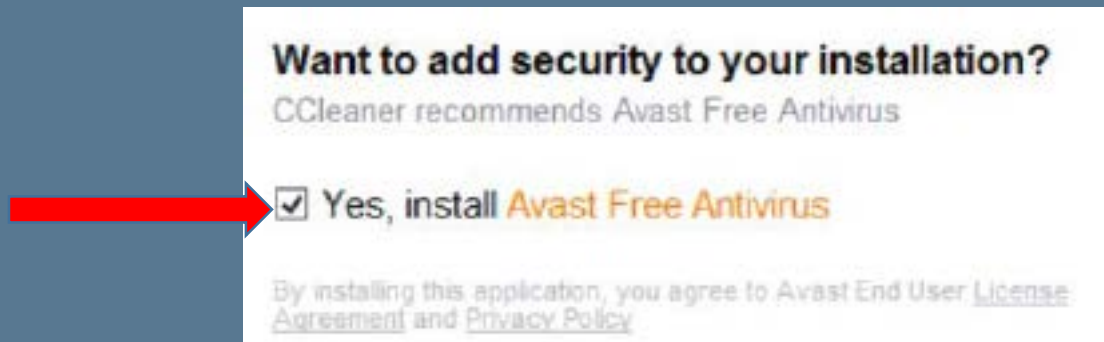
Note: Your antivirus software must allow you to install software.

Install now

Total size: 20.3 MB

Ccleaner Warning

With this utility now being owned by Avast, you might see another "Optional Offer" in the form of an option to install Avast Free at the same time. If you already have Avast A/V you might not see this option but if you don't want it make sure the box is unticked.





There are many other utility programs that offer a wide range of functions.

As always, you must do your research to find out which ones are good for you. User reviews are well worth reading.

However, be careful where you look and what you choose - it's definitely the Wild Wild West out there.

Finally only use extensions/add-ons that are linked to and available via your browser.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a vertical arrangement of stylized circuit lines and nodes. The lines are in shades of green and blue, and the nodes are small circles. The pattern is more dense and complex on the left and tapers off towards the right.

Questions: