

TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

The Best Freeware on the Web

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Recently, I took a quick survey of the techs at Beasley Technology: “What is the best free software on the Web?” They gave me some great information to pass on to you. Each of these programs is available as a free download. Some of these are essential for the health of your computer; some are just kind of nice to have around. We will post a link to each of these downloads on our website, www.beasleytech.net, so you don’t have to worry whether or not you are downloading the right thing. Here is the (by no means comprehensive) list:

- **Malwarebytes** helps clean spyware off of your computer. I have talked several times about spyware. It slows down your computer and gives information about you to outsiders. A serious spyware infection can render your computer basically useless. If you keep it updated and use it regularly, Malwarebytes will keep your computer free of spyware.
- **CCleaner** is another great tool for cleaning up (and thus speeding up) your computer. It cleans out temporary files, Internet history, cookies, and your Recycle Bin. It will also remove any saved website passwords, so you will have to retype them the next time you visit those sites.
- **Dropbox** is a free service that allows you to synchronize files between computers that are not physically connected. For example, if you have a file that you want to access both at work and at home, you can save it in Dropbox and, provided you have installed the client on both computers, you will be able to access the file in both places.



- **ImgBurn** is good for making back-ups of your CDs and for burning disc images to CD or DVD. In the words of one tech, “It’s small, easy to use, and doesn’t come with unneeded junk.”
- **PDFCreator** is the number one pick of “the Beasley himself,” as one of our customers once called Geoff. It allows you to convert anything you need to print (documents, spreadsheets, images, etc.) into PDF format. The advantage here is that almost anyone can open a PDF file, so it virtually eliminates compatibility issues.

- **Firefox** is a free web browser, similar to Internet Explorer or Safari. All of our techs swear by Firefox and use it almost exclusively. They all have different reasons for this fact, and this is a hotly debated topic in cyberspace. But hey, if thirteen techs swear by it, who am I to argue?

- **Skype** is a videoconferencing tool that is gaining popularity. I have a friend whose husband is in Iraq, and they plan weekly “Skype dates.” It is great for anyone with loved ones who live far away. One caveat: the videoconferencing is free, but phone calls, voicemail, etc., are NOT free, so be very well informed before you begin using it.

- **OpenOffice** looks and acts similar to Microsoft Office, but it is totally free. While we don’t recommend it as a permanent replacement for Microsoft Office, it is still an option for those on a tight budget.

These are just a few of the many great free programs our techs suggested. Again, please visit our website for the links to these downloads so you can be sure you are getting the correct software. If you have questions or need help, please don’t hesitate to call Beasley Technology at (918) 225-6900.