



F-Secure Internet Security 2005



PRICE £33 (£40 inc VAT)

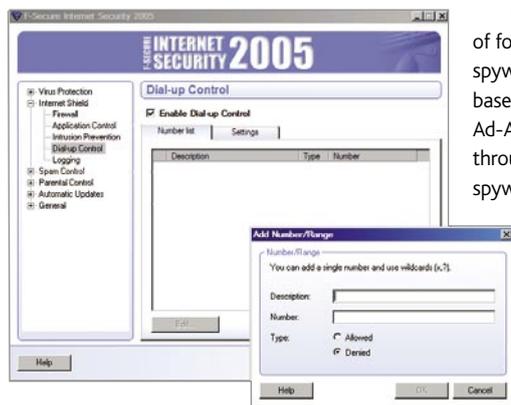
INTERNET www.f-secure.co.uk

VERDICT No frills but plenty of protection and zero tolerance for hassle make F-Secure hard to resist. All that's missing is a personal-privacy-protection component, but it's otherwise hard to fault.

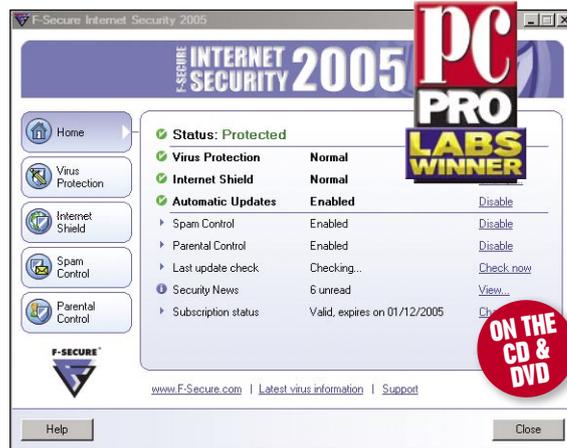
F-Secure has been in the security business a long time, with its F-Prot anti-virus scanner breaking the mould by introducing a new weapon against virus-writers: heuristic scanning. This looks at the characteristics of an attack rather than just a signature, and could offer protection against as yet unknown viruses by understanding those key shapes and forms.

Although F-Prot is still around today, the F-Secure Virus Protection product, which is at the heart of Internet Security 2005, is much improved. F-Secure's virus labs provide daily signature file updates that are automatically pulled into the product to bolster the heuristic capabilities. You can tell these guys take things seriously from the get go: the first install screen has an option to perform a full scan before doing anything else, and is presented in such a way that you're compelled to do just that. Always a sensible move, but not always an option that's open to you.

Unfortunately the clarity and sense are thrown out of the window just a few short minutes later when, having completed much of the setup routine, you arrive at the code-activation screen. Before F-Secure completes the setup and reboots, you're asked to register online to activate the application, but there's no indication given that your computer is protected from either viral infection or intrusion attempt at this point. Indeed, the feeling we had was that most likely you aren't – a hunch all but confirmed after registration when F-Secure



The little things, like the rogue dialler controls, make all the difference in a market of similar products.



Clarity, simplicity and security could be the motto of F-Secure.

insists you must reboot as the computer isn't properly protected until you do!

Another interface-cum-usability option we didn't much care for showed its face early on during the Startup Wizard that appears upon rebooting. The offending question being, do you want to allow 'any program' access to the Internet. Despite the note suggesting this might not be a good thing to do, it's sheer madness to offer such a choice to the great unwashed masses in the first place.

Thankfully the rest of the wizard was much more sensible, stepping us through our default web browser and email clients to be sure they could connect first time without hassle. A nice touch, as was the fact that during this process the first of the program updates was downloading quietly in the background. And it was just as well; the updated data files totalled some 6MB from what seemed to be a rather stressed-out server, considering how long it took to arrive.

Fortunately, scanning was a lot more fleet of foot, be it anti-virus or for spyware. The spyware component is worthy of note as it's based upon the 'Daddy' of such scanners, Ad-Aware by LavaSoft. As expected, it flew through our tests and uncovered all the spyware we'd tried to hide. Unexpected

discoveries such as this make F-Secure an intriguing product. Delve into the firewall options and you find a dial-up control that allows you to either enable or disable call attempts based upon number ranges you enter. A useful weapon in the ongoing war against rogue diallers.

Although there's no privacy component, the parental controls worked

as intended, as did the spam filtering. Indeed, the anti-spam control was good considering we did nothing to tweak it at all – it managed to stop an impressive 91.6 per cent of the spam thrown at it. What's more, the false-positive rate of 2.2 per cent was comfortably inside our 2.5 per cent limit and so passed that part of the spam test as well, which few others did.

It also managed to avoid joining the crowd on the bells and whistles front. There's nothing fancy about F-Secure: the interface is simple and business-like, as are the functions.

No array of graphs and charts, no detailed statistical analysis, just good old-fashioned graft on your behalf. This combination of simplicity and strength is something we'd like to see more of in this sector of the market; F-Secure holds your hand when it has to and just gets on with it when it doesn't.

Attention to detail is everything here, like the security news bulletins that are downloaded at the same time as the signature updates – so not only are you automatically protected, but you know what against and why, simultaneously. F-Secure isn't unique in doing this by any means; Norton has its much heralded Outbreak Alerts for example, but while they both do essentially the same job one

does it with a lot more style. Indeed, we found that even uninstalling the software was a quick and stress-free task. No multiple rebooting, no holding of breath and crossing of fingers, just an efficient uninstallation.

It's this kind of efficiency that runs all the way through F-Secure, and it's precisely this that lifts it above all the other Internet security suites we've seen.

LABS RESULTS

Anti-virus	Pass
Firewall (visibility)	Pass
Firewall (port probe)	Pass
Firewall (DoS simulation)	Pass
Firewall (Nuke simulation)	Pass
Parental control	Pass
Privacy	Fail (no privacy component)
Spam (filtered)	Pass
Spam (false positives)	Pass
Spyware	Pass
Total	9/10

PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

REQUIREMENTS 600MHz Pentium III; 256MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space; Windows 98 onwards.