

ZDNet Readers' Choice: Top 25 free, lightweight apps

By Andrew Nusca



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ZDNet Readers' Choice: Top 25 free, lightweight apps

In February, I asked ZDNet readers for the free, lightweight applications they simply can't live without. After tallying the suggestions in the comments and via e-mail — and there were an awful lot of good suggestions, believe me — here are the 25 most popular.

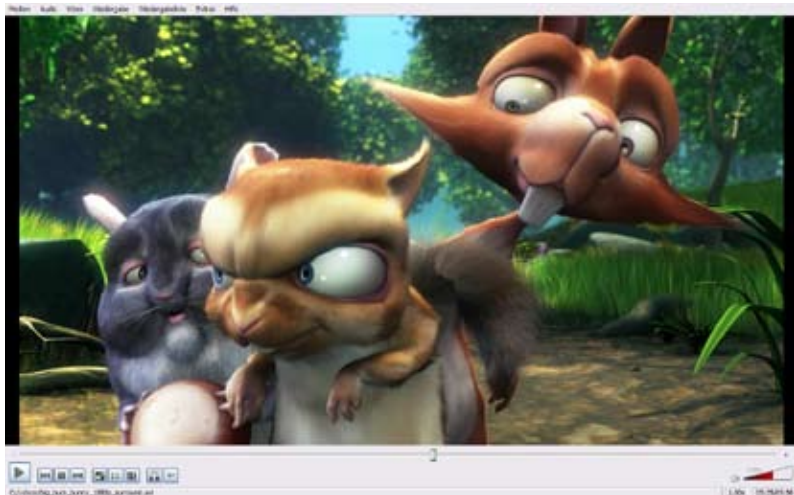
Editor's note: Don't see a download for your operating system? Use the official site link.

1.) VLC

By far the most recommended application, VLC is the Swiss Army knife of media players: it will play pretty much any file type you throw at it, as well as rip CDs and DVDs, convert video files to iPod-friendly formats and stream media to other computers.

[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#)

[\[ZDNet download: Mac\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)

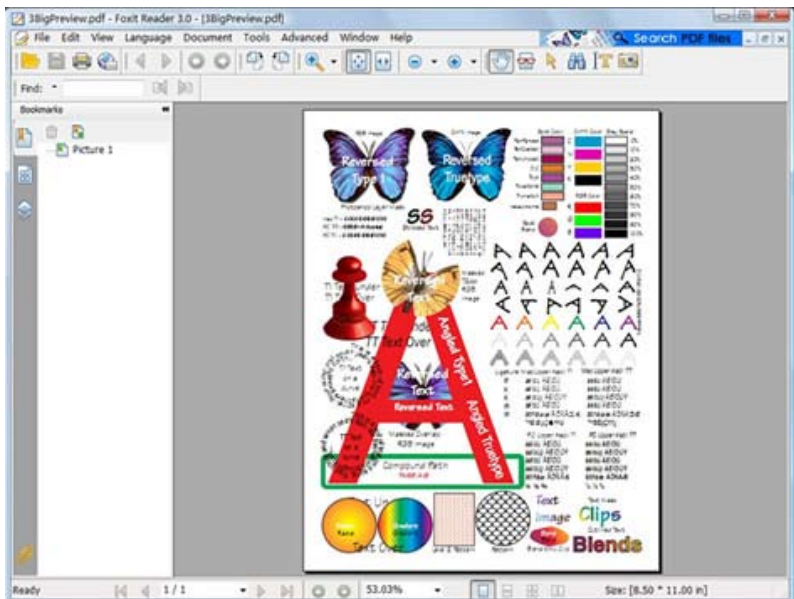


2.) FoxIt Reader

FoxIt Reader is a small, fast PDF reader that conveniently replaces Adobe Reader on Windows, Windows Mobile, Linux and more. There are no splash windows at startup, and the app features annotation as well as PDF-to-text conversion.

[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[ZDNet](#)

[download: Windows Mobile\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



3.) Pidgin & Adium

Pidgin and Adium are fraternal twin brother instant messaging clients on separate platforms: Pidgin for Windows (Mac, Ubuntu, etc.), Adium for Mac. ZDNet readers love their multi-protocol nature (AIM, Yahoo!, gTalk, ICQ, etc.) and light, ad-free footprint.

[ZDNet download: Windows: Pidgin] [official site: Pidgin]

[ZDNet download: Mac: Adium] [official site: Adium]



4.) IrfanView

IrfanView is a lightweight image viewer, editor and processor that can batch edit photos with lightning speed and a plethora of keyboard shortcuts.

[ZDNet download: Windows] [official site]

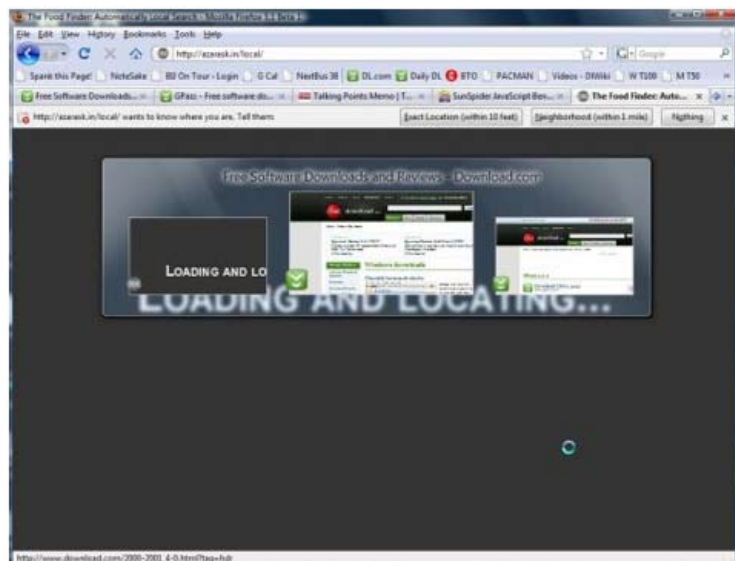


5.) Firefox

Bar none ZDNet readers' favorite web browser, the unparalleled versatility and speed of Mozilla's Firefox browser gets better with each release.

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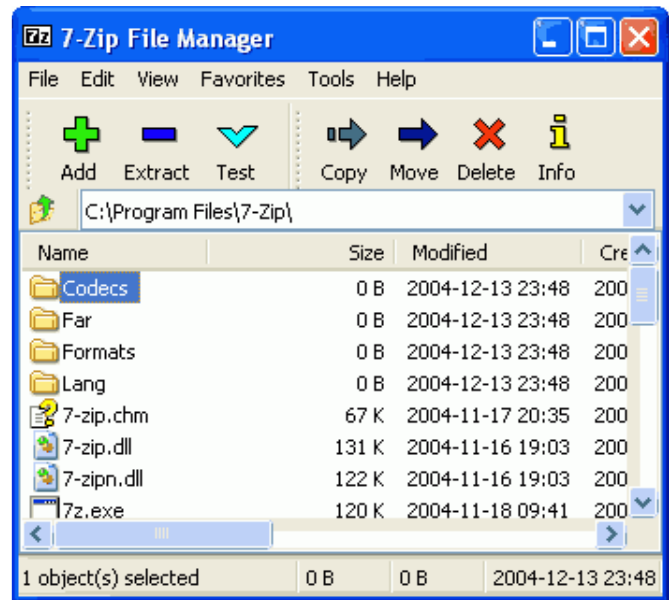
Mac] [official site]



6.) 7-Zip

This highly-recommended open-source app is ZDNet readers' favorite for archiving files. Extract and zip files of various formats, including .zip and .rar files.

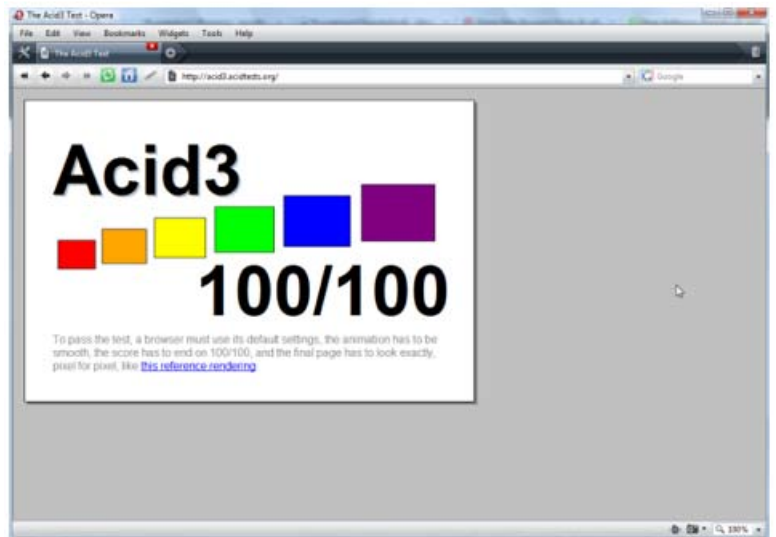
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



7.) Opera

Behind Mozilla Firefox stands Opera, another speedy standout web browser that many would argue doesn't get enough proper attention. With added security and plenty of handy shortcuts, Opera is a lightweight browser of choice.

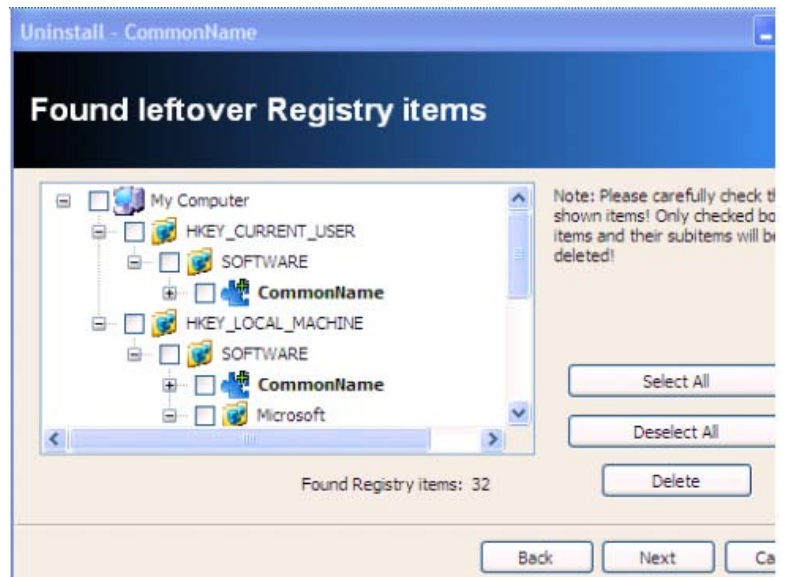
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[ZDNet download: Mac\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



8.) Revo Uninstaller

When installed programs just won't get the heck off your system, it's not the Ghostbusters you call — it's Revo Uninstaller. With a slick interface, Revo makes stopping startup programs, removing installed programs and permanent file deletion easy.

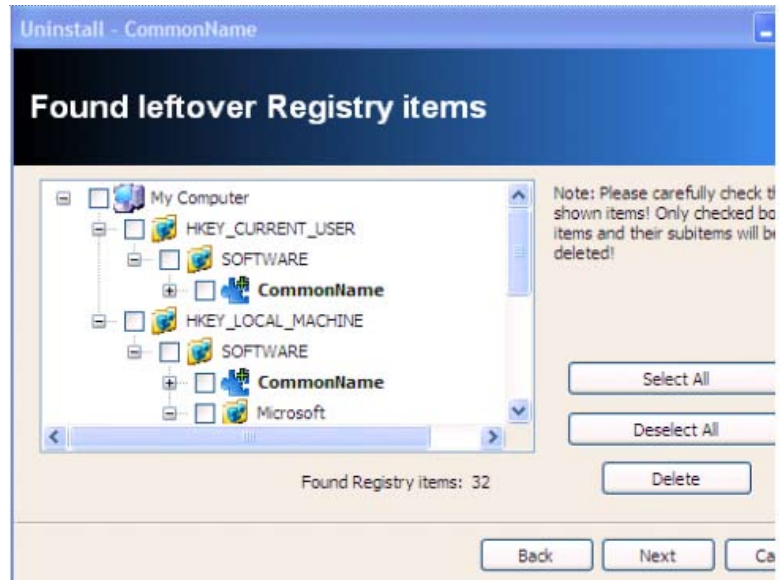
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



9.) Evernote

Like to take notes but can't keep track of all of them? Evernote solves your problem by capturing, storing and managing your data across platforms — from your desktop PC to various mobile devices, including the iPhone, Palm Pre, BlackBerry and Windows Mobile devices.

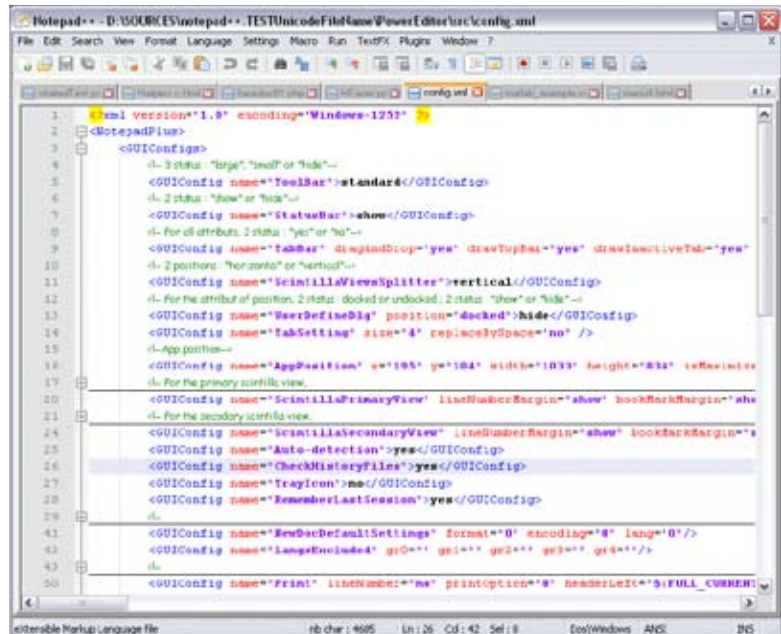
[ZDNet download: Windows] [ZDNet download: Mac] [official site]



10.) Notepad++

Evident in its name, Notepad++ was designed to replace Notepad with a more robust feature set for source code editing. It manages to do so by supporting several coding languages (C, C++, Java, HTML, XML, PHP, CSS, Flash ActionScript, etc.) and offering syntax highlighting.

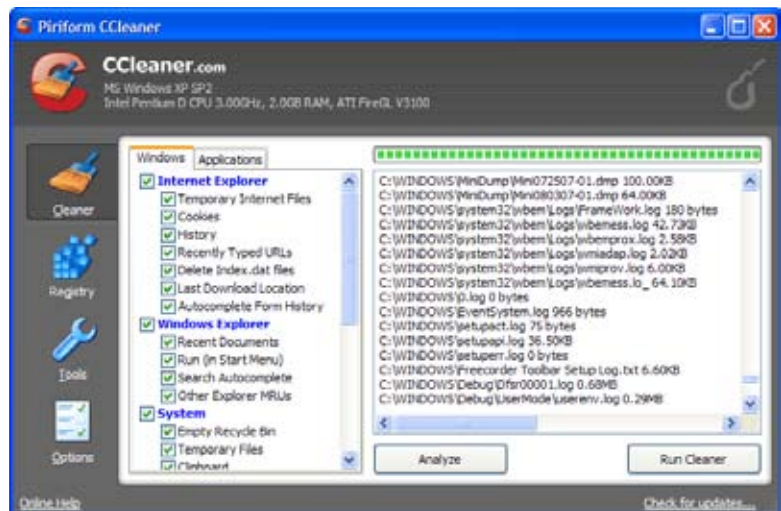
[ZDNet download: Windows] [official site]



11.) CCleaner

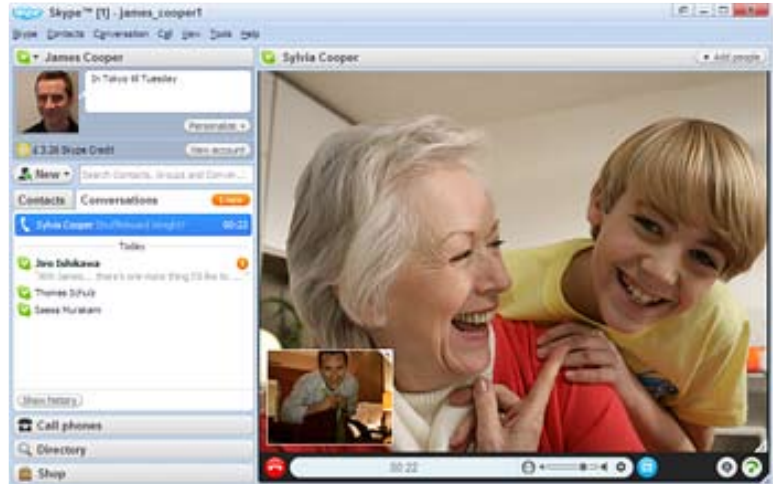
ZDNet readers' most popular registry and browser cleaner, program uninstaller and startup folder editor multitool by far, CCleaner gets the job done quickly, with a tiny footprint and ongoing updates to keep things fresh.

[ZDNet download: Windows] [official site]



12.) Skype

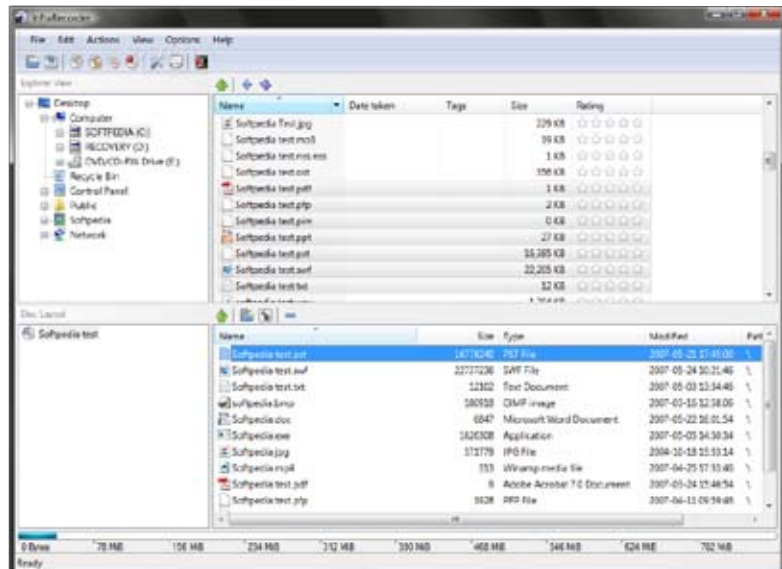
The application that brought voice-over-IP, or VoIP, to the masses, Skype remains the most popular and versatile phone and videoconferencing tool out there — especially for intercontinental communication. It's available for Windows, Mac, Linux and several mobile phones, including the iPhone, Windows Mobile, Nokia and even PSP.



[ZDNet download: Windows] [official site]

13.) InfraRecorder

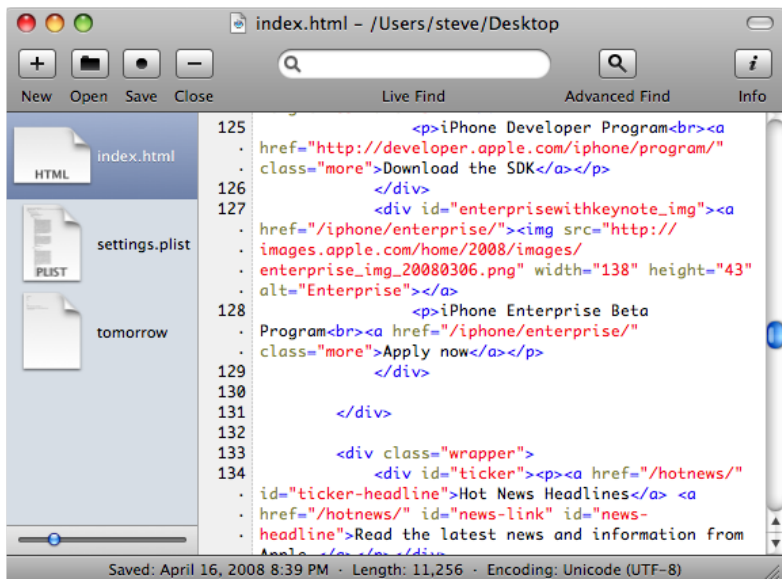
When it comes to burning and ripping CDs and DVDs, plenty of ZDNet readers prefer InfraRecorder, an open source app for Windows that can handle ISO, BIN/CUE, dual-layer DVDs and four methods of erasing discs.



[ZDNet download: Windows] [official site]

14.) TextPad & Smultron

TextPad for Windows and Smultron for Mac achieve similar goals on separate platforms: both programs are robust code-editing tools with syntax markup and a wealth of useful tools and shortcuts. Naturally, both are beloved by developers.



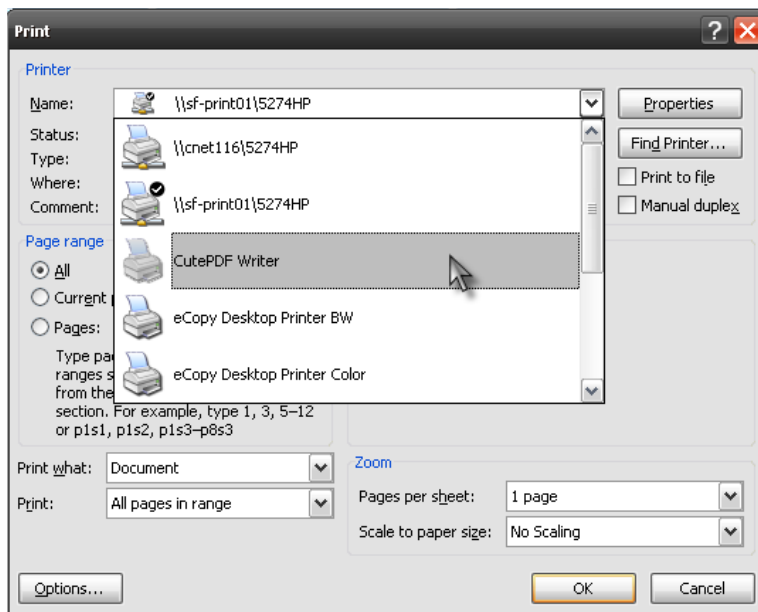
[ZDNet download: TextPad] [official site]

[ZDNet download: Smultron]

15.) CutePDF Writer

ZDNet readers who don't have Adobe Acrobat prefer CutePDF Writer, a Windows-based PDF creation tool intended to help users who need to create PDFs from pretty much anything.

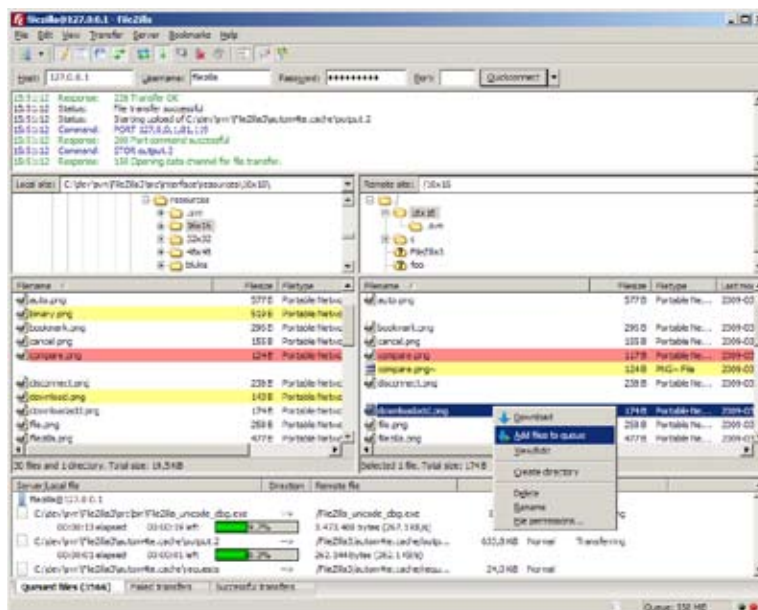
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



16.) FileZilla

Users looking for a free FTP program turn to FileZilla, an open source app that is available for Windows, Mac and Linux and offers a fairly robust feature set (IPv6, resume files, drag and drop, transfer speed limits, etc.).

[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[ZDNet download: Mac\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



17.) Malwarebytes Anti-Malware

It's not easy to find a lightweight way to scan your computer for files from the dark side of the 'Net, but Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware does the trick quite nicely. A scan will take less than 10 minutes, preventing your productivity from grinding to a halt.

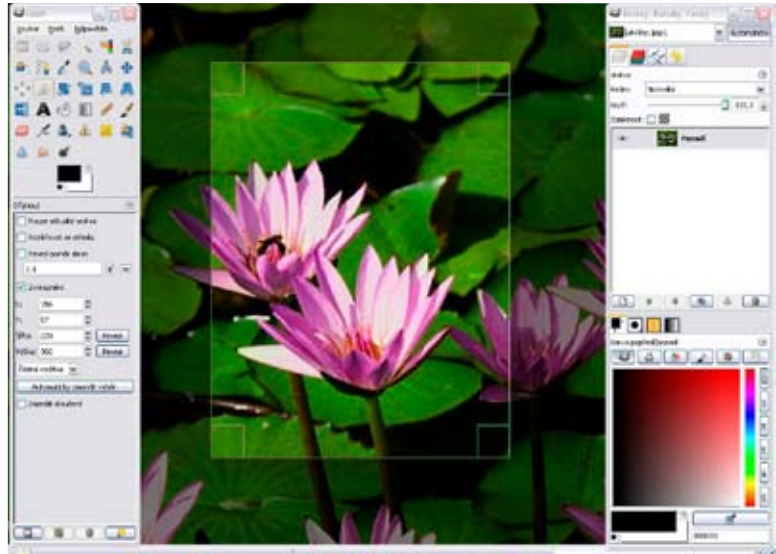
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



21.) GIMP & Paint.NET

The amazingly full-featured GIMP is the everyman's Adobe Photoshop, and packs a surprising amount of power into a free, open source image editing application. If you're looking for something even lighter, Paint.NET is the way to go, and claims a lot of support from the ZDNet ranks.

[\[ZDNet download: GIMP: Windows\]](#) [\[ZDNet download: GIMP: Mac\]](#) [\[official site: GIMP\]](#)
[\[ZDNet download: Paint.NET\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



22.) Belarc Advisor

Power users who want to know the ins and outs of every piece of hardware and every installed program on their computer would be wise to check out Belarc Advisor, which gives your Windows PC a full system audit in minutes.

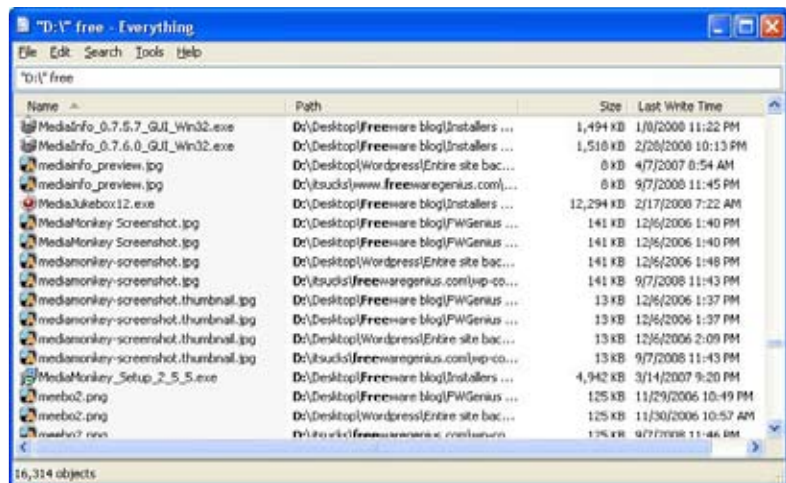
[\[ZDNet download: Windows\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



23.) Everything

Find Windows files as you type with this aptly-named application, which is a simple, fast file-locator with added integration with FTP servers.

[\[download\]](#) [\[official site\]](#)



24.) TrueCrypt

TrueCrypt is a free, on-the-fly disk encryption program that ZDNet readers love. From virtual encrypted disks to partition encrypts and automatic settings, this program gets the job done, no questions asked.

[ZDNet download: [Windows](#)]

[ZDNet download: [Mac](#)] [[official site](#)]



25.) Launchy

The fastest little Windows application launcher on the planet, Launchy can be summoned with a keystroke and allows you to easily find anything on your computer — rendering your start menu and desktop icons useless.

[ZDNet download: [Windows](#)] [[official site](#)]



Honorable Mention: Microsoft Windows Sysinternals Suite

Several readers recommended the Sysinternals Suite, which is a collection of more than 60 individual troubleshooting tools, including [Process Explorer](#), which shows you information about which DLL processes have opened or loaded, and [AutoRuns](#), which shows you what runs automatically at startup and in which order.

[[official site/download](#)]

