



*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at [noccc.org](http://noccc.org).*

**QUESTION:** You recently published an article on a free CD burning program. What are some of your other favorite free programs and how do you know if they are safe to download and install?

**PC CLUB:** The free program that you are referring to is CD Burner XP available at [www.cdburnerxp.se](http://www.cdburnerxp.se). This is the actual publisher's web site so it is fairly safe to download from there. Even so it's a good idea to have an up to date antivirus program running at all times. In addition, you should right-click any downloaded program installation file and select the option to scan it with your antivirus program prior to installing the program. Most antivirus programs provide this option.

My list of favorite freeware programs is quite long so I'll mention just a few of them and also give you some sources for finding additional programs. These sources are well known and mentioned frequently in several PC newsletters. Here are some freeware examples:

- CCleaner available at [www.ccleaner.com](http://www.ccleaner.com) for cleaning up your hard drive
- Malwarebytes available at [www.malwarebytes.org](http://www.malwarebytes.org) for spyware detection and removal
- Microsoft Security Essentials available at <http://bit.ly/msessentials> for antivirus
- Picasa available at [www.picasa.google.com](http://www.picasa.google.com) for managing your photos and much more
- FastStone Image Viewer available at [www.faststone.org](http://www.faststone.org) for viewing and managing photos
- FreeCommander available at [www.freecommander.com](http://www.freecommander.com) an excellent File Manager
- Real Player available at [www.real.com](http://www.real.com) for downloading videos from YouTube and the Web in general
- MP 3 Joiner available at [www.medafan.com](http://www.medafan.com) for joining or splitting MP3 audio files. This is handy for iPod and iPad users.
- Wavosaur Audio Editor available at [www.wavosaur.com](http://www.wavosaur.com) for editing sound files. This program is easier to use than Audacity which is available at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> and requires an additional free plug-in called LAME. This is available at <http://lame.buanzo.com.ar/>.

- Open Office available at [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) is a substitute for Microsoft Office
- Everything Search Engine available at [www.voidtools.com](http://www.voidtools.com) for locating Files and Folders virtually instantaneously.

Here are some sites for obtaining additional freeware programs:

- Gizmo's Freeware at [www.techsupportalert.com](http://www.techsupportalert.com). This site lists freeware by category. The secret to finding a particular type of program is to search their site using Google. To search for an audio editor, for example, just search with the following phrase – “best free audio editor” without the quotes of course. Look for results containing techsupportalert in Google's results.
- AllMyApps at [www.allmyapps.com](http://www.allmyapps.com). This site has links to a lot of freeware programs that are very useful to new PC owners. This site allows you to create a custom list and download the programs as a group for \$2.99. This group can be placed on a flash drive also. Individual program downloads are free.

There is a magazine published monthly called PC Utilities which is available in bookstores or by subscription. The magazine is accompanied by a DVD loaded with free programs. You can read about it at <http://www.magnesiummedia.com/pcutilities>. I have accumulated over 20 DVDs from this company containing 1,000's of freeware programs and just recently, my antivirus program, ESET NOD32 reported an infected file. Don't trust anyone. My other PC with Microsoft Security Essentials did not tag it as infected.

Even though many freeware programs have commercial counterparts that perform more functions, this is not always the case. For example CCleaner and Malwarebytes are unparalleled as far as these types of programs are concerned.

Beware of unscrupulous companies trying to take advantage of unsuspecting PC users trying to sell similar programs when the free ones are actually equal or superior in performance.

For exploring more sites see the links at my Web site. Select the On-line Info menu and select Freeware. Most of the links should be valid but every once in a while one vanishes into the night.

If I omitted your favorite freeware program, go to my Web site and contact me by clicking the “Contact Me” menu.

When downloading these freeware programs I recommend that you first create a folder for them and maybe even subfolders by category. This will make it easier to retrieve them in the future. - Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his Web site at [www.edwardns.com](http://www.edwardns.com).