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1. Consider these low-cost antivirus solutions

2. Freeware options

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Consider these low-cost antivirus solutions

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 Tech Republic
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Tighter budgets are forcing many IT departments to look for new ways to cut costs and/or limit purchases. One easy way to minimize expenses is to use low-cost software alternatives that fulfill essential needs. A key area that smaller companies can investigate is antivirus software. Every desktop needs protection from viruses and worms; however, small businesses, remote office networks, and home users who connect remotely can all get by on low-cost antivirus software in most cases.

Turning to cheaper antivirus solutions can help you secure your networks while significantly reducing software costs. A number of companies below the big hitters like Symantec, Network Associates, and SonicWALL offer solid products to help you protect your assets on limited budgets. Consider the following products as possible alternatives to the mainstream antivirus programs:

- ✦ Panda Antivirus Titanium
- ✦ PC-cillin 2002
- ✦ EZ Antivirus
- ✦ Protector Plus 2000
- ✦ F-Prot Antivirus
- ✦ Quick Heal X-Gen
- ✦ V-Catch
- ✦ AVG Antivirus 6.0
- ✦ AVAST32

These programs offer features comparable to those of high-end products but at significantly lower prices, so they may be good solutions for small businesses or remote offices. IT departments may also want to recommend one of these programs to employees dialing into the office (using a modem or VPN) from their home PC.

Panda Antivirus Titanium

Panda Antivirus comes in both [Titanium](#) and [Platinum](#) flavors. You can download free evaluation copies of each program, but to obtain updates, you have to register the product. That's not much of a problem, considering the Titanium package costs only \$24.95 and the Platinum is a mere \$5 more. That's if you purchase via download. Purchasing the boxed Platinum product costs \$59.

Not only is it cheap, but it's also a high-quality product. Panda's Platinum product has received good reviews, and in a July 2001 review, *PC World* rated it the top antivirus product. If you're looking for a low-cost antivirus solution, Panda Antivirus may be the best option available at its price.

Panda also offers small-business solutions with a variety of site-license and subscription duration options. For more information, visit [Panda Software's Web site](#).

PC-cillin 2002

Once upon a time, Trend Micro's [PC-cillin](#) was free. Now you can download a 30-day trial for free, but it costs \$30 to purchase the product or \$19.95 if you're upgrading from a previous version. PC-cillin delivers solid antivirus protection and costs less than most packages. It's a viable alternative to the high-end products.

For small-business or home users, PC-cillin is a good fit. Of course, Trend Micro offers a wide array of antivirus products to fit just about any company's needs. For product details, visit [Trend Micro's Web site](#).

EZ Antivirus

Another good low-cost option is eTrust's [EZ Antivirus](#). In terms of bang for the buck, EZ Antivirus is a decent option. You can download a free 30-day trial of the program and purchase the full program for \$19.95. The annual fee for updates after the first year is \$9.95, which pushes the total cost up a bit, especially when you consider that many companies offer free updates. But this fee is still moderate.

Reviews of EZ Antivirus have generally been positive. CNET gave EZ Antivirus a rating of 6 out of 10. Of the users downloading EZ Antivirus from CNET's Download.com, 79 percent gave it a thumbs-up.

EZ Antivirus is a viable alternative to the more expensive programs. Granted, more expensive programs might provide more comprehensive protection, but EZ Antivirus is a

rising contender that could very well climb into the upper ranks.

Protector Plus

Proland Software's Protector Plus looks like another complete, low-cost solution. Protector Plus offers a full set of virus-scanning features and includes an automatic updater to keep virus definitions up to date and reliable. Users downloading the free 30-day trial have given Protector Plus high marks as a viable antivirus alternative.

Protector Plus is available for download from the [Proland Web site](#). The purchase price is \$29.95.

F-Prot

[Frisk Software's F-Prot](#) has also been well received by users and promises reliable antivirus performance. You can download a 30-day trial of the program, and if you decide to buy, the purchase price is \$25.

F-Prot is unusual in that it has versions available for all Windows platforms as well as for Linux and even DOS.

Quick Heal X-Gen

Don't overlook [Cat Computer Services' Quick Heal X-Gen](#). Once a freeware product, Quick Heal is still a good option at \$30.

Cat Computer Services offers free upgrades for Quick Heal, and the program can automatically update its virus definition files, relieving you of the hassle of constantly checking for new releases. Quick Heal is definitely worth a look if you're considering low-cost options and want a product that requires little maintenance.

1 2 | Next page →

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