

## Firewalls Hardware vs. Software for Home users

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We should all understand the need for a firewall for our home network. Firewalls help protect our computers from viruses, worms, Trojans, & hackers. What we may not think about is the difference between hardware firewalls and software firewalls. Here are some examples of software firewalls: Windows XP firewall, Zone Alarm, Norton Internet Security, Kerio Firewall, Check Point, and there are many others. Now here are some examples of (consumer grade) hardware firewalls: Linksys, D-link, Netgear, Iogear, Sonicwall, Netscreen, and many others. The cost of a home firewall can vary but the estimated cost are anywhere from \$30 - \$150 USD for either a hardware or software firewall. So lets now take a closer look at the differences between the two.

### Software Firewalls

The idea behind a software firewall is to protect your computer from harm by checking incoming and outgoing traffic for known Malware. Normally you have a training process to setup the software firewall by “burning it in”. The software firewall will alert you to all kinds of traffic you may or may not know that is coming and going from your computer to the internet. It will probably ask you if you want to let this traffic through. Once you get past the training phase you are setup and ready to surf. Some of the user advantages for a software firewall are how easy setup is and updates are similar to antivirus software. Also a lot of software firewalls are built into antivirus programs so you might already have one running now. Some of the downsides to this kind of firewall are that the software vendors may not tell you about vulnerabilities and there are always going to be chances that without updates your computer can still be at risk. Just keep in mind that you should treat your software firewall the same as your antivirus products and keep it updated.

### Hardware Firewalls

Hardware firewalls are normally safer because they are separate devices than your computer and any dangerous traffic get stopped before it hits your computer. Also if for some reason your network gets attacked your firewall takes the burden of the attack and not your PC. Other pros to the hardware firewall is that you can use it to protect all the computers on your network and this can save money from not having to load the software on all your computers. Hardware firewalls are also normally better because they are made to just protect your network and only serve this purpose unlike software firewalls that are just programs to run on your computer and can be disabled from other software and Malware.

### Final Review

Let's now go over what we have covered and discussed in this article. Software firewalls are great and can help protect your PC. Keep in mind software firewalls are only as good

as there last update. Hardware firewalls provide awesome protection and can as protect the whole network. The best thing to do is use both hardware & Software firewalls if you can. We recommend using the hardware firewall to protect the network and also using the software firewall to protect the PCs. Keep in mind that most of your antivirus software comes with some kind of software firewall protection and Windows XP (Home & Pro) has a software firewall option. There are also free software firewalls you can download from the internet. No matter how you chose to protect your network just use some kind of firewall and always use antivirus software.

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