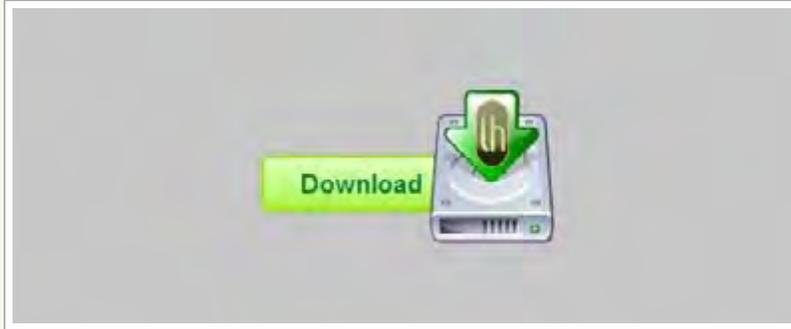


Lifehacker Pack 2009: Our List of Essential Free Windows Downloads

By [Kevin Purdy](#), 4:30 PM on Mon Jun 1 2009, 42,501 views

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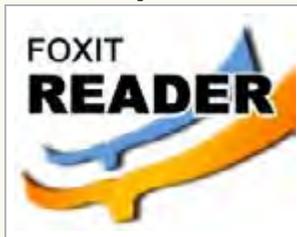
We feature downloads of all kinds every day at Lifehacker. Today, however, we're bundling all the best free downloads for new computer owners, re-installers, would-be geeks, or anyone who wants to save time installing the best stuff out there. This is our 2009 Lifehacker Pack for Windows computers.

The idea is the same as when we [first introduced the Lifehacker Pack](#) more than three years ago—a single, handy list that we think improves the computer lives of Windows users. We're also providing a utility to download some or all of these applications at once—more on that after the list.

You can head directly to each application's download page from the [Download] links following their write-ups, and see what Lifehacker originally wrote about them at the [LH Post] link. If there's a portable version of an application that you can run off a thumb drive and/or test out without installing, we've linked to that at [Portable], or added a "+Portable" to the main download link.

Onto the list!

Productivity



■ **Foxit Reader** - Opens, save, and prints PDFs much faster and lighter than Adobe's official reader, whether on your desktop or through your browser, and it won't nag you every two hours to update it or its "components." There are some down-sides, like how it asks to install a browser toolbar during installation, and some reported difficulties with multiple monitors. But if a document absolutely won't work with anything but Adobe-sanctioned Reader, try [Adobe Reader Lite](#), which cuts out all the "Maybe You'll Also Like" add-ons and extras out of Adobe's product and leaves just its basic rendering intact.

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■ **Notepad++** - If you just want to write, save, and edit text, it's hard to go wrong with Notepad++. This freebie offers tabbed file views, syntax coloring for those working in HTML or other code, and, as the name implies, does a whole lot of what most people wish Notepad did. If you want a free office suite that offers *most* of what Microsoft's Office suite does, try [OpenOffice.org](#). If you love working in the constantly-backed-up cloud, try the [Zoho](#) or [Google Docs](#) suites. [Download] [LH Post] [Portable]



■ **Texter** - Whether you write code, write out the same address repeatedly, or constantly misspell a certain word, Lifehacker's own text replacement app wakes up whenever you type certain phrases and then springs into action, saving you serious time and helping you avoid burdensome busy work. [Download (+Portable)]

Internet/Communication



■ **Firefox** - All debates about security, memory use, or compatibility amongst the web browsers aside, Firefox can adapt to nearly anyone's browsing habits through a range of adaptations. Whether that's an extension/add-on (and here are our [top 10 picks](#)), a Greasemonkey script (again, [our 10](#)), or some deep-down [about:config tweaks](#), Firefox can probably be what you want it to be. Put down the Internet Explorer and slowly back away into a better web life. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)] [[Portable](#)]



■ **Pidgin** - Do you ever use AOL/AIM, Google Talk, MSN, Yahoo, ICQ, Jabber, or even old-school IRC to chat online? Pidgin has you covered, and it's got [plenty of recommendable plug-ins](#). It can tab your chats in a single window, update you on new emails, and work inside most any smiley system out there (which has, oddly enough, become a notable issue). And while the up-and-coming IM app and-then-some Digsby has garnered a lot of users, its large footprint and questionable installation choices (it's got a really unfriendly installer that tries installing a lot of adware) keep us firmly in the Pidgin camp for now.

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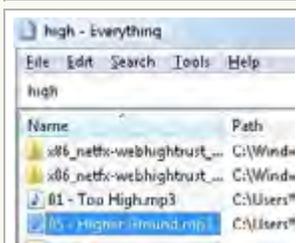


■ **Postbox** - If you're not using your email's web interface, use this. It's basically [Thunderbird](#), the open-source email client we'd previously included in our Lifehacker pack, but remixed with stronger, almost Gmail-like powers. It finds and indexes all the attachments in your email account, groups together conversations with similar subject chains with the "Gather" command (like Gmail's conversations), offers tabbed inbox and message views, and lets you organize emails under your own chosen "Topics." It's also got built-in easy setup steps for Gmail and other webmail systems—in other words, everything we're waiting to see Thunderbird implement. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]

Utilities



■ **7-Zip** - The fix-all archiving/un-zipping program. It basically fills in all the gaps in your system's compression abilities. Multi-file RAR packages, Mac-formatted archives, and even ISO images can all be opened, and the right-click integration makes it all too easy to do so. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)] [[Portable](#)]



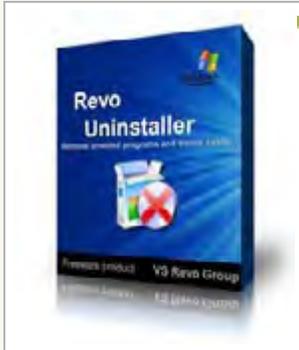
■ **Everything** - Does what you really want when you hit "Search" in Windows. It's really tiny, doesn't need to be installed if you don't want, and searches for files across your system with the speed of a jackrabbit gone rogue on old-school cold medicine. Faster than that, really, and it makes [finding and deleting file types](#), digging through your browser cache, and any other file search task far faster. We used to recommend Google Desktop for a system-wide search tool, and it certainly has its merits—including some neat gadgets for [Gmail](#) and [Google Calendar](#)—but, in most cases, you're not going to

need to find a single word out of every single document on your system. You just want that `apples.doc` thing, wherever it is, and Everything finds it as fast as you can type it. [[Download \(+Portable\)](#)] [[LH Post](#)]

■ **µTorrent** - Also known as uTorrent. If you're a complete newcomer to BitTorrent, uTorrent makes it easy. Install it, and any torrent file you click on is automatically handled and grabbed by uTorrent, and saved in your Downloads folder, making a



seemingly nerd-core activity as easy as opening an MP3. If you're a BitTorrent pro, you should know that uTorrent's features—remote control and download starting from the web, a phone, or using DropBox—truly set it apart. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



- **Revo Uninstaller** - Windows doesn't always remove everything that a program leaves behind—file folders, Start menu items, menu entries, you name it. Revo Uninstaller does. It runs a standard uninstaller, then it searches your system for everything the program changed or touched while it was installing. If you don't know the name of a program you want to kill off, or don't see it offered when Revo starts up, choose "Hunter Mode" and click on a window or message from that program. Got annoying programs that start up with your computer without permission? Yeah, Revo handles them too. It's like the software equivalent of bleach. [[Download \(+Portable\)](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



- **TeraCopy** - Windows is slow, and occasionally fails, at copying large files, or just big batches of them. TeraCopy copies things between destinations faster, with more options on what to replace or skip based on file dates, and can actually be (gasp!) paused if you need to do something else while The Complete Works of Woody Allen are being transferred. [[Download \(+Portable\)](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



- **ImgBurn** - It does just about everything you can possibly do with a CD, DVD, Blu-Ray or HD-DVD disc, and the image files that make them. Use this instead of the software that came with your system or add-on disc drive, because it can make music discs, data backups, video DVDs, and other projects with grace and speed, and all for free. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]

Photos & Video



- **Picasa** - One of the few software recommendations that this editor's wife, parents, and other relatives actually stick with after installation. Google's free software indexes your computer's pictures and makes them a snap to flick through, [lightly edit without a Photoshop degree](#), and share through email or uploading to Picasa Web Albums (or an [add-on button](#)). Most important of all, it makes importing pictures from any digital camera a lot more intuitive than Windows' own process. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



- **VLC** - Got a video or audio file to play? VLC probably plays it. Don't like how naggy and heavy-running Windows Media Player is? VLC is lighter. Want it free, working on any system, and have it show album art from your tracks? Done and done. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)] [[Portable](#)]

Music



■ **If you own an iPod or iPhone—iTunes** - For seamless syncing between your iPhone or iPod devices and your music collection, it's hard to beat iTunes—which is, of course, Apple's intended outcome. There are [other iPod-to-computer solutions](#), but none are really worry-free and seamlessly integrated with everything an iPod can do, including updates, album art transfers, and, in the case of iPhones and iPod touch models, backups. It's not that bad a music manager, either, especially if you've got a huge collection or compatible Apple devices, like AirTunes-capable speakers. If you need it to do more, check out our picks for [the 23 best iTunes add-ons](#). [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



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■ **No iPhone or iPod—Songbird** - Like iTunes, except open-source, open to [killer add-ons](#), and much more web-savvy—point it at a web page full of music, and it plays it like it's just really fancy playlist. It can, in fact, play Apple-formatted tracks with a (default) add-on, including any older, copy-protected songs you bought from iTunes, and manages non-iPhone/touch iPods fairly well, but you'll still need iTunes for restoring, upgrading, and backing up your device. For music in general, though, Songbird is a nice midway point between iTunes' big, big tent and a tight little open-source player. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]

File backups/syncing



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■ **DropBox** - Put simply, DropBox makes synchronizing your files across Windows, Mac, or Linux systems a very simple, almost magical process. Put a copy of what you're working on or want saved in your DropBox folder, and it's synchronized to your account, which has 2GB to start with, and gets bigger if you recommend friends. When you're at another one of your own computers, your DropBox updates and grabs those files. If you're at someone else's system or on a smartphone, head to DropBox's mobile-friendly site and grab what you need. It's not quite a backup tool, but it is one of those utilities that makes a lot of old habits—thumb drive copying, CD burning, multi-email self-mailing—

seem unnecessary. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]



■ **Mozy** - If DropBox is where you stash the stuff you're working on or enjoying at the moment, Mozy is the backup service that saves everything for when your system goes black on bootup. The free accounts for PCs (and Macs) offer 2GB of free online space, and with the really smart filtering tools, you can have Mozy crawl your whole system and back up financial documents, Excel sheets, and any file with "Rick" in it. If you spring for a monthly unlimited plan, Mozy is a smart whole-system saver, one that doesn't eat bandwidth when you're using it, and works when you're not working. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)]

Security



■ **KeePass** - It's where you keep your passwords, and create [one password to track them all](#). It has [lots of great plug-ins](#) for your browser, other programs, and cool functionality. And it's available for every platform, so you never have to fear losing all the secrecy you pour into its secure little well. [[Download](#)] [[LH Post](#)] [[Portable](#)]

■ **AVG Free** - We actually prefer versions of this free anti-virus app earlier than 8.0 for



their, shall we say, more quiet and subtle operation. But it still does a good job of keeping up to date on the latest virus threats and protecting against them, when needed. [\[Download\]](#) [\[LH Post\]](#)



■ **Spybot Search & Destroy** - Just read through the list of what Spybot protects against—trackerware, info-tracking cookies, homepage hijackers, trojans, pop-up producers, keyloggers, advertising controllers—and you'll want to stop thinking about what a trip around the net leaves inside your system. Spybot is a tested and true veteran of the net annoyance wars, and has a support network of enthusiastic updaters. [\[Download\]](#) [\[LH Post\]](#)



■ **Ad-Aware** - It somewhat crosses over with Spybot's protection, but if you (or a friend/relative) have a system that's regularly filled with mysterious, malicious stuff, it's never a bad idea to let Ad-Aware comb through and safely clean the craft out. [\[Download\]](#) [\[LH Post\]](#)

Want to grab some or all of these applications at once to save a little time? We've created a [Lifehacker Pack bundle](#) that combines [Phil Crosby's](#) excellent [InstallPad](#) app and our own Lifehacker Pack as its default installation list. To use it, [download the Lifehacker Pack bundle](#), extract the two files from it into a folder or onto your desktop, and then run the InstallPad app; you'll see our must-have list ready to download and install in a snap. You can un-check the apps you already have or don't want, install apps individually, or mass install everything you've got checked with one click. We included everything in the InstallPad list except iTunes, Songbird, and the Mozy backup software; the former two because they're somewhat of an either/or choice (at least in our list), and the latter because it requires a sign-up and registration to really install and use properly.



If you're intrigued by InstallPad or want to customize your own pack, check out [Gina's](#) feature on [automatic InstallPad installation lists](#).

We're certainly open to suggestions on what makes for the ultimate list of Windows freeware for anyone looking to get ahead on their computer. Give us your verdict on our list, and your own suggestions for a must-install list, in the comments. Happy downloading!

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