# Top Ten Apps/Utilities Update

## Introduction:

For over 6 years now, in one way or another, I have been part of the online hardware community. But even before the online boom I have been tinkering with PC hardware and software: Since the early 80's - to be more exact, ever since the good old days of the marvelous trusty rubbery old Speccy I have been intrigued and thrilled by PC's and related hi-tech hardware.

After all these years it still amazes me that you can find within the PC hardware community PC savvy guys (gals too, I guess) that can OC a spanking new P4 or Athlon XP so much as without blinking an eyelid, spend weeks lowering case temps by 1 deg C and building H20 cooled systems but when it comes to the most mundane task such as using an FTP client to transfer a mere zip file they look at you as if it's practically quantum physics.

Therefore I have put together a top 10 list of tried & tested freeware/non- expiring shareware apps/utilities that I feel are crucial, not only as extremely useful apps for any PC enthusiast, but as symbols of awareness of what are simply the best of the best free apps/utilities out there on the web.

February 2003 Update: Lots of MHW readers gave me really good feedback and tons of suggestions. I have updated the list to reflect the free apps I have been using since the original article was published. Also the revisions and links have been checked for necessary updates.

One final thought: The internet browser market is dominated by Microsoft's IE, but as of lately I have really seen the need for tabbed browsing, built in pop-up killing and intelligent 'managers'. The latest versions of Opera & Mozilla already support all of these. Take heed Microsoft: IE 7 needs these features, once the free competition browsers squash the bugs and websites appear as the html coder intended them to, then market domination may start to falter. Already I am testing Mozilla 1.3b Beta... Opera 7 is next on my list.

My personal criteria for any shareware/freeware app is an absolute adherence to the following:

- No spyware piggybacking the installation.
 - No tricky EULA.
 - No shameful nagging.
 - No hogging system resources in an abusive manner.
 - Easy disable of autoloading.
 - Stability.
 - Ease of use. Tons of tips & tricks or tutorials out there on the web.
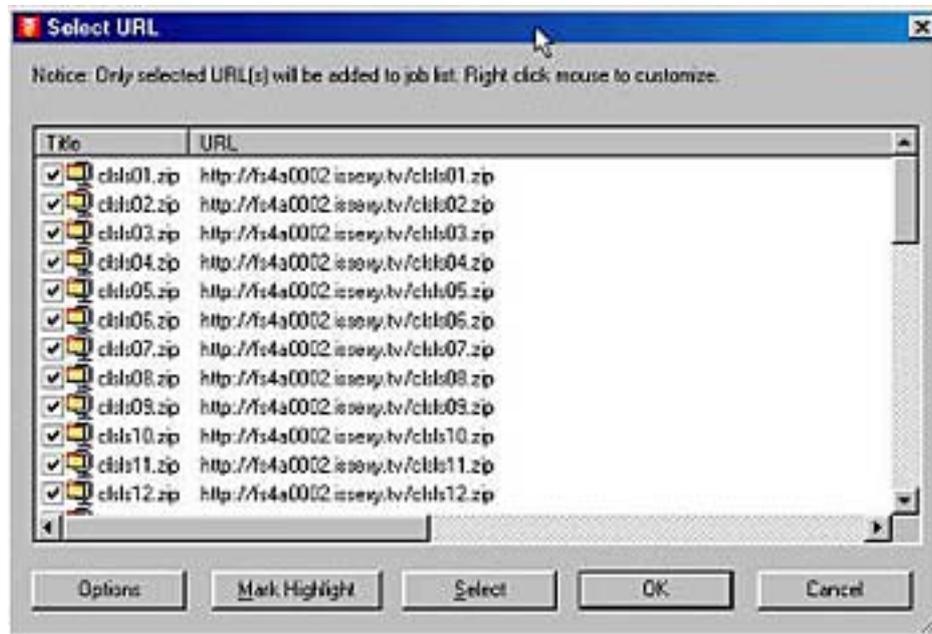 - No BS. Period.

## The Software:

**Download Manager:** [FlashGet 1.4](#)

Author: Amazesoft / Kevin Hou

What can Flashget do for you? Flashget can and will help you to take control of numerous downloads. You can split files into 1 to 8 parts and download in parallel, which is extremely useful for downloads that have restricted bandwidth for each download thread. For example - if you were downloading a 100K file with Internet Explorer with a restriction of 10k/sec per thread - it would take you 10 seconds to download, but using Flashget with 8 simultaneous threads it will take you less than 2 seconds. Now take a 100MB file and
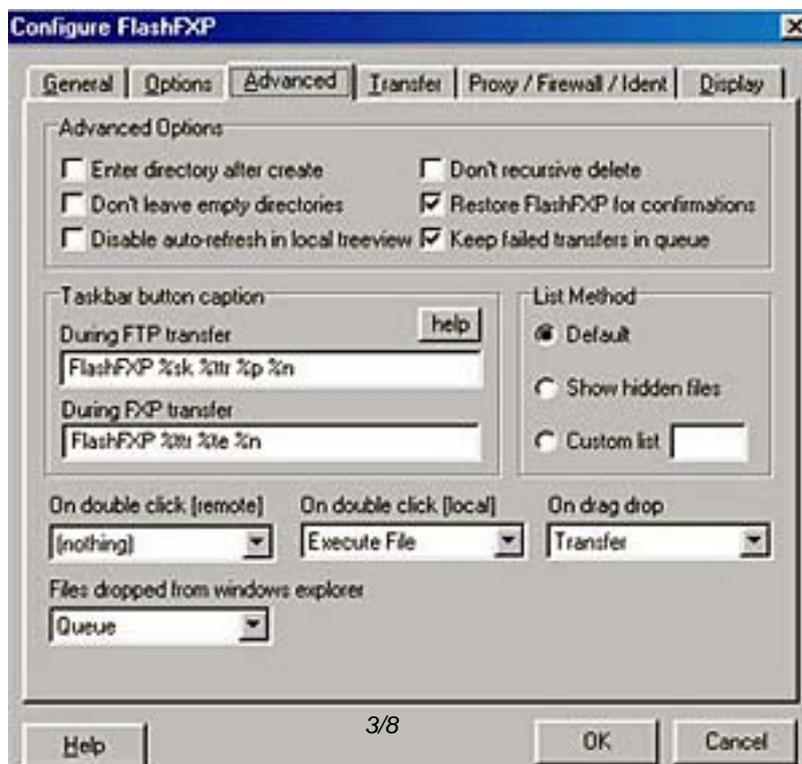
you really see the benefits.

But there is more, you can queue unlimited files for downloading - even have 8 files simultaneously downloading, bypassing the HTTP restrictions of IE. Flashget will also allow you to resume partially downloaded files, automatically disconnect from your ISP after downloads are finished. You also get a tiny sizable window, graphically displaying the speed of the downloads that you can keep an eye on while browsing or using other apps, even during gaming! You also get a Site Browser that can display the contents of FTP or HTTP sites... sometimes bypassing viewing restrictions etc. Extremely useful.



**FTP client:** [FlashFXP 2.0](#)

Author: CEDsoft / Charles DeWeese

Flash FXP is a superior FTP client with added value. Resumeable downloads/uploads, very easy to learn interface. Intelligent reconnection retries, extremely flexible & configurable resuming of downloaded / uploaded files. Ability to work with firewalls or proxies. Advanced support of FXPing between FTP sites. Ability to list & create hidden files/directories. Very stable and can be minimized to system tray. Multiple windows can be used at once. look no further for your FTP client needs.
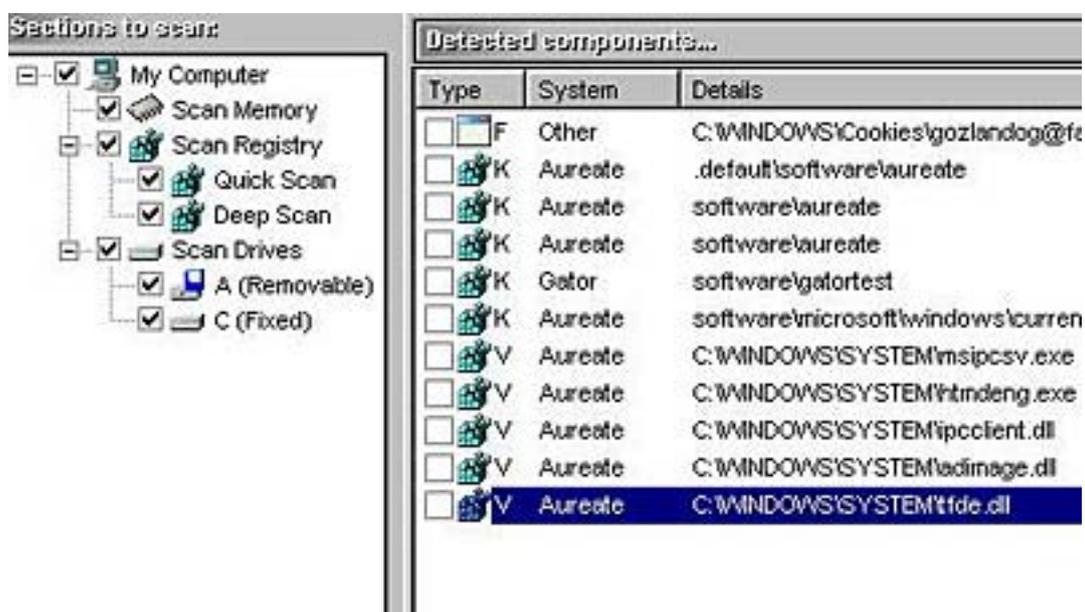
Configure FlashFXP

General | Options | Advanced | Transfer | Proxy / Firewall / Ident | Display

Advanced Options

☐ Enter directory after create      ☐ Don't recursive delete
☐ Don't leave empty directories     ☑ Restore FlashFXP for confirmations
☐ Disable auto-refresh in local treeview  ☑ Keep failed transfers in queue

Taskbar button caption

During FTP transfer      [help]
FlashFXP %sk %ttr %p %n

During FXP transfer
FlashFXP %ttr %te %n

List Method
◉ Default
○ Show hidden files
○ Custom list [      ]

On double click [remote]    On double click [local]    On drag drop
[(nothing)        ▼]        [Execute File      ▼]      [Transfer        ▼]

Files dropped from windows explorer
[Queue            ▼]

Help                                    OK      Cancel

**Spyware Removal:** [AdAware 6.0](#)

Author: Team Lavasoft

Adaware will scan your system for known spyware Files/directories/registry entries based on research done by lavasoft. To be really fair I have to add a comment, based on experience, that on most occasions the simple removal of spyware will still allow the 'original' app (meaning the application the spyware piggybacked to gain unwarranted access to your system) to function, on some occasions you may have to perform some minor modifications to still use some apps. I have to stress that I have never had (or heard of) system errors happen on any of my systems due to Adaware's functions. I do suggest you use the built in simple option to backup the detected spyware before allowing Adaware to remove the nasty snoops. Every few weeks you can update your ref file to enable detection of new spyware.

Update: The LavaSoft site and software have had quite a makeover. The new version 6.0 is still as good, if not better than the previous version.



**Pop-Up Prevention:** [EMS Free Surfer mkII](#)

This app has ousted out PanicWare's Pop-Up Stopper from this list which is quite a commendable feat. I even have EMS in my PC's Start Up folder now.Main features are: Multiple language support, quick close of open browser windows, easy configuration.

The app is easy to shut down or disable and there are no nags whatsoever. Good stuff.

**Software Firewall:** [ZoneAlarm 3](#)

Author: Zone Labs

What can Zone Alarm do for you? ZoneAlarm will protect your PC from intrusions and hostile attacks by combining a personal firewall with program control. You get to say what software can access the web. Painlessly define authorizations or restrictions once and forget micromanagement in the future. You can opt to view all, some or none of the incoming/outgoing online alerts. Zonealarm has a really intuitive graphical interface to help get by all the available configurations in an easy manner.

Most likely the best free software firewall available. Again, to be fair, some early revisions of Zone Alarm were a real pain to uninstall and had me combing through the registry to clean out all traces of Zone Alarm after finding out the hard way that the uninstall wizard did not do it's job and had left me with all internet connections blocked. The latest revision, I am happy to tell you, is free of the said uninstall nightmares.
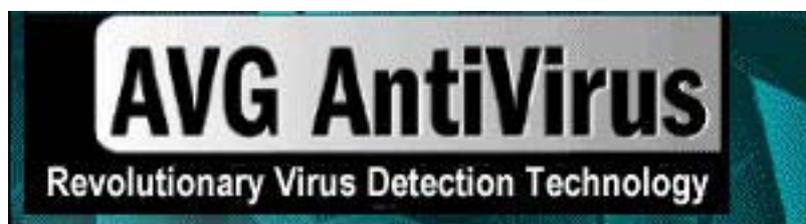


**Free Antivirus:** [AVG 6.0 Free Edition](#)

Author: Grisoft

If you're pretty much fed up with Norton's and McAfee's vice like grip they inflict upon your system and if you're needlessly intimidated (as they want you to be) with their constant, but meaningless, sales-oriented version 're-vamps' then it's time you booted up your system without them. Please welcome Grisoft's AVG 6.0 Free Edition antivirus and security software. I have installed this software on quite a few systems now and I am pleased to report that it is bug-free, simple to configure, easy to update and it works. It found a very new worm on one of the systems it was installed on and succeeded in cleaning it off.Configuring automated tasks of updates and scanning are a breeze, as are disabling and re-enabling the software during gaming or benchmarking.

The only gripe I have is that I could not find an option to configure a proxy for access to their website for automatic updates. The majority of home users should not find this an issue.
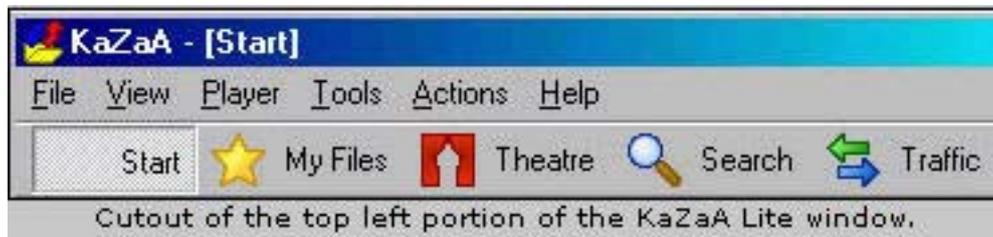


**P2P Sharing:** [Kazaa Lite](#)

Author: Shaun Garriock

Since P2P file sharing is really the hottest topic on the web (not to be delved into here) no broadband connected PC should be caught in this day and age without a P2P app or two. What can Kazaa Lite do for you? In a nutshell, all what Kazaa can, but without the nasty spyware that gets smuggled onboard your system. Bye-bye 'Brilliant Digital'. See you in hell 'Cydoor'. If Adaware (see above) could 100% of the time

remove the snoopware associated with Kazaa without losing functionality of Kazaa then Kazaa Lite could be made redundant and Kazaa might have made this list (even though their legal mumbo jumbo is very difficult to understand and borderlines with blatant trickery). Kazaa Lite places a dummy .dll file during installation in your selected directory. This is .dll file has no effect on the functionality of the program. It is simply there to make Kazaa believe it is running as it expects to. I am doubtful anyone reading this article is not aware of Kazaa Lite...but even one soul saved is worth my while.



Cutout of the top left portion of the KaZaA Lite window.

**Audio/Video Player:** [WinAmp](WinAmp)

Author: Nullsoft

Winamp is the absolute best hi-fi music player for the Windows platform. Among the supported formats are MOD, WAV, MJuice, WMA, ASFS, VOC, CD audio, MPEG layer 2 and 3. Besides the basic volume, balance and playback controls, Winamp includes a 10 band equalizer, spectrum analyzer, preamp settings, portable playlist control, thousands of downloadable skins, effects and plug-ins such as mp3 --> wav conversion.

Recently version 3.x has been released and besides a major interface overhaul it brings some new features to the table such as cross fading between tracks, video file playback & advanced scripting support for power users. I am sticking for now with the 'classic' 2.xx version due to some over hogging of system resources by version 3. Hopefully that is resolved by now or will be soon. Download Winamp 2.xx here.



**DiVX Player:** [DivX Player 2.0 Alpha v 5.03](DivX Player 2.0 Alpha v 5.03)

Author: DIVX Networks Inc.

Gone are the days of Microsoft Media Player 6.4's iffy support of Divx codecs. The era of solid Divx support is here. Do not be fooled by the title 'Alpha' I have yet to experience any bugs or glitches with this release. DIVX Networks' Player 2.0 is the next generation Divx player. With simple controls, high performance, excellent playback and powerful tweaks such as de-blocking, enable/disable post-processing, advanced filter control and much more. Divx 5 is here to stay (at least until version 6) and looks great with this player. Tons of support, tutorials, guides and technical articles surrounding this player & codec can be found at the author's website. I Have not used MS Media Player since installing this player.
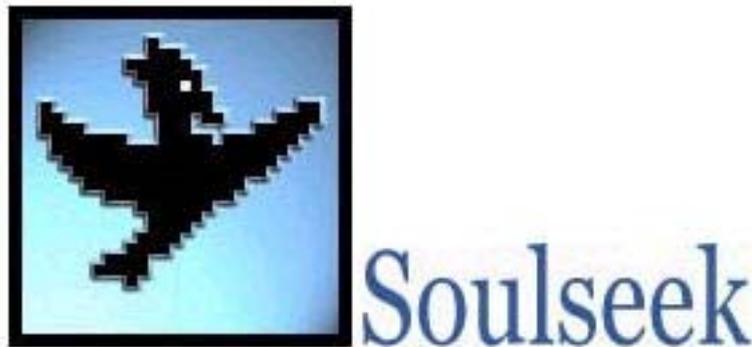
**P2P Sharing:** [Soul Seek](#)

Author: Rosalind & Nir Arbel

Hopefully after you have looked at the above nine apps/utilities you will be glad to know that you have used or are using most or all of them, but maybe slightly disappointed that nothing is new under the sun. Well, please welcome Soul Seek, a fairly new P2P app that I can proclaim as a rightful successor to AudioGalaxy (RIP).

Many people on the web I talk with really miss AG and have not found yet a music sharing app that can replace it. AG had every style of music ever converted to MP3 format available. But more important: Downloads were fast and reliable.

Over the past 6 weeks I have been using Soul Seek and I am happy once more. Soul Seek enables me to sample and listen to complete albums before I buy them. And I do buy. Most of my audio enjoyment is in my car and believe me nothing sounds more crappy as a MP3 file played over a six speaker system with a 900W sub. Soul Seek have an active forum and an encompassing FAQ section. Give Soul Seek a spin and see for yourself.

Update: After a week or so of nail biting lately, Soulseek is back up and running on a new host. Thanks Nir!



**Final Word:**

Please drop me an email or look me up in the MHW forums to tell me how good/bad/stupid/rotten my software taste buds are. Also, it would be great if you let me know of the next free killer app out there.

Gozlandog

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