



Alpha Shield Customer Product Review

I have been using the Alpha Shield now continuously for about 3 months on my home PC. I am currently running Windows XP and have an @Home internet connection. Lately I have been both concerned and fascinated by network security issues and a friend of mine gave me your product to demo. Overall, I have been quite pleased with the Alpha Shield product. This short document is a brief discussion of what I like and dislike about the Alpha Shield unit.

Pros:

1. I like the fact that it is portable and easy to install. I have brought it to work with me on a number of occasions to use with my laptop PC. The install is ridiculously simple and the device is so compact that it fits into my pocket.
2. I also really appreciated the easy to use and friendly interface. It is very clear from the design of the unit what the buttons are for as well as the indicator lights. One small complaint about the indicator lights though. I am red-green coloured blind, as are 1 in 20 white males, and without good lighting it is difficult to tell if I am connected sometimes. On the plus side, if I ever did have a connection problem and wasn't sure if I had been cut off, I simply tapped the button everything was good to go once again. The 15 minute connection timer took some getting used to but I like the feature just in case I forget to log off.
3. I like the good solid design and rough feel to it. Unlike my Terayon cable modem, which looks and feels like Humpty Dumpty teetering on a wall, the Alpha Shield can and has taken a beating.
4. As far as security issues are concerned, the Alpha Shield provides me with full stealth mode online. I have run a series of tests and the Alpha Shield performed beautifully on protecting my computer from all inbound security threats. All of my ports are operating in full stealth mode and for all intents and purposes I do not exist online when the Alpha Shield is activated. That is great news as far as I am concerned because no online scanners can find me. Moreover, with the Alpha Shield activated, my machine appears to discard all non-solicited packets. What this means is that if there is an attempt to scan my home machine, the scanner must wait for the maximum period for my machine to respond to requests before determining that I do not exist.



Cons:

1. I do not like the documentation that comes with the unit. Nowhere on the box or the manual does it say exactly what the Alpha Shield will protect against. More importantly, nowhere does it say what it will not protect against. I am a fairly competent user but I can see many customers buying this unit with anti-virus protection in mind and this isn't the case.
2. I would like to see this unit come in a router package sometime soon so that I can protect my entire home network and not just one machine. I imagine this sort of prototype will eventually evolve into just such a device.
3. The biggest single problem with the Alpha Shield is that it does not protect the user from outbound packets. Any good firewall should protect not only from incoming traffic but for outgoing traffic as well. If I may quote from Steve Gibson at www.grc.com "Any comprehensive security program must safeguard its owner by preventing Trojan horses, viruses, and spyware from using the system's Internet connection without the owner's knowledge." The Alpha Shield does not seem to do this.

Overall, I am very pleased with the product and I hope you continue to work with this technology to build safer networks. I also hope that future versions of this product will address some of the issues that I have brought up here. I can see that your company has worked very hard to produce such a fine security device that allows for full stealth mode while online. I look forward to future revisions and innovations using the Alpha Gap technology and will certainly talk about this device with my networking students at Port Moody Secondary.

Yours truly,

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