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Forgoing Software For a Firewall You Can See

By J.D. BIERSDORFER

With worms and viruses - not to mention malicious humans - loose on the Internet, sitting down at your computer to do a little Web browsing can feel a bit like exposing yourself to the Sword of Damocles, that legendary blade suspended by a thread and a bit of luck. But a good shield can deflect many a sword, and hence comes AlphaShield, a hardware firewall said by its eponymous manufacturer to be "100 percent unhackable" and backed by a 100 percent money-back guarantee.

Intended for home broadband users - those with high-speed cable or D.S.L. connections that are very fast and always on - the AlphaShield is a small plug-and-play box that takes about a minute to install between the computer and broadband modem.

Once there, it blocks all incoming Internet traffic except that requested by the user. The box offers a hat trick of antihacker security functions: stealth Internet Protocol technology, which makes the computer's Internet address invisible to network prowlers; Real Time Packet Authorization, which scans each bit of data going to and from the computer; and an AlphaGAP feature, which quietly disconnects your computer when it is not in use.

Because the AlphaShield operates independently from the computer, it can be used with one running any operating system. It is available for \$100 at www.alphashield.com and at stores like [RadioShack](#). And because the AlphaShield requires no installed software, you need not worry about updating, upgrading or otherwise patching any program as you battle to stay safe. J. D. Biersdorfer

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