

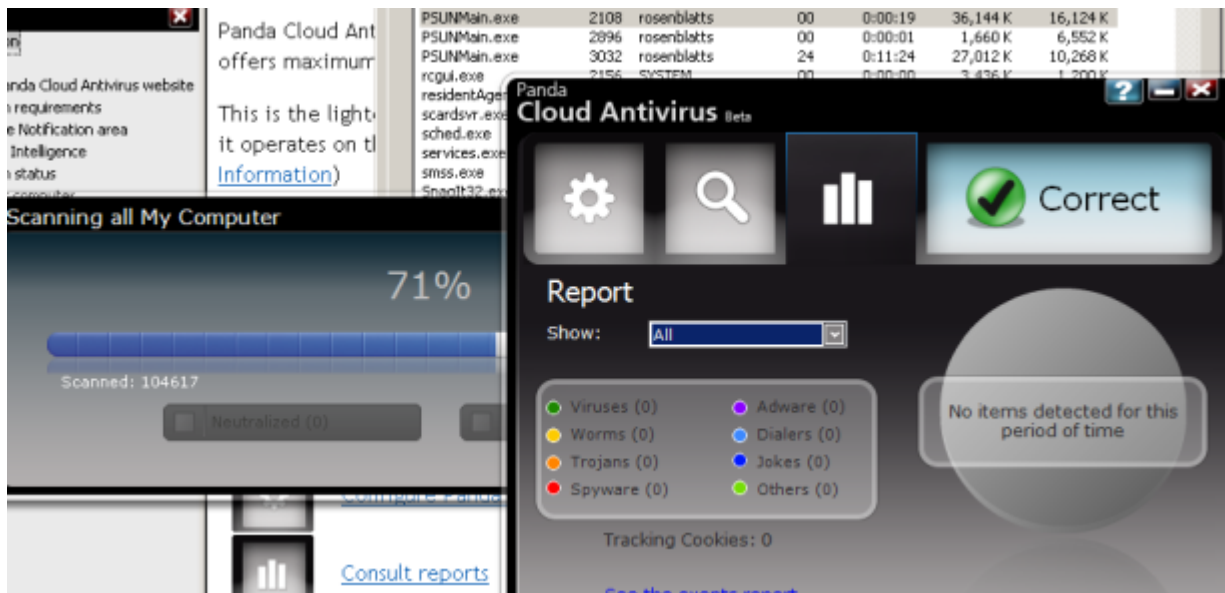
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Cloud Antivirus runs smooth but slow

by [Seth Rosenblatt](#)[Font size](#)[Print](#)[E-mail](#)[Share](#)[Yahoo! Buzz](#)

Earlier Wednesday, Panda Security introduced [Cloud Antivirus beta](#), the first full-featured cloud-based antivirus program. It does two things that make it competitive and unique compared with its competitors that are tied to your desktop: it prioritizes threats based on type, and it attempts to lighten the load that security programs place on your system resources by moving definition files to a community-based cloud.



Panda Cloud Antivirus and its system resource usage as it performs a scan.

(Credit: Screenshot by Seth Rosenblatt/CNET)

The big concern about a cloud-based antivirus is performance, and Cloud Antivirus handled itself decently enough--although it's not a record-setter. On a ThinkPad T42 with a 1.7 GHz Pentium M chip, 1.5 GB RAM, and running Windows XP SP2, Cloud Antivirus used about 23 MB of RAM when idle.

When running a scan, the scan client ate around 40 MB, but the main client jumped to around 32 MB. The scan also took a long time, with only 45 percent of the computer scanned in more than 30 minutes. Pausing the scan client dropped the usage rate from 40 MB to 2 MB.

If you install the program, you can find it listed in your task manager under PSANHost and PSUNMain. There was no noticeable lag when loading programs such as [Firefox](#) or MS Word, no browsing the Web. Granted, these tests are empirical and casual, but they bode well for future use by the average consumer.

In February of this year, Panda [received higher scores](#) than before for its antivirus detection abilities and lower false positives than in previous years from AV-Test.org.

The program uses a minimalist design to emphasize its features. Cloud Antivirus runs as a panda icon in your system tray. Double-click to open the main screen, which sports a dark theme with translucent borders. The entire window goes translucent when you drag it.

Your security status will appear first, with a large icon and font size telling you whether you're in trouble. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the status tab is on the right side of the window. Moving from right to left, the tabs use icons to identify their features. A bar chart represents the Report tab, a magnifying glass for the Scan tab, and a gear wheel for the Settings. A hard-to-see turned-corner arrow lives in the bottom-right corner of the pane. Click it, and it takes you to the "neutralized" window-- basically, it's the quarantine. The arrow then moves to the lower left corner, which you need to click again to get back to the main tabbed window.

The layout isn't hard to follow, but users will have to do some exploring since there's no mouse-over labels to help here.

The Settings tab hides proxy settings and a toggle for Panda's proprietary Collective Intelligence cloud network. Turn it off, and one of the program's most powerful features goes away. You'll still get cloud-based definition updates, but you won't be contributing to the community that's keeping you safe. The Scan tab has two options: to scan your entire computer, or to scan selected files or folders from your desktop. The Reports tab lets you see the results not only of your last scan, but also of scans

from the past 24 hours, previous week, and past month.

Panda Cloud Antivirus looks like a move that could have long-reaching effects for consumer security, showing that just because your protection is based in the clouds doesn't mean your head is lodged in them.

Clarification made April 30 at 12:40 p.m.: This story initially contained a typo, inadvertently giving the wrong measurement of RAM on the ThinkPad we used for our testing. It has 1.5 GB of RAM. Thanks go to several readers for pointing out the error in TalkBack.

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