

Sophos Anti-Virus SBE 2.0

SOPHOS

Rating: ★★★★★

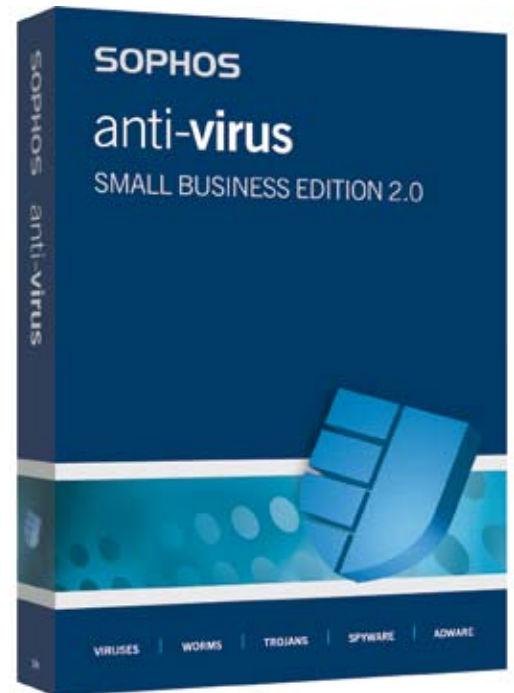
Price: £579.99exc VAT (25-user licence)

Company: Sophos

Review Date: Jun 07



Verdict: An outstanding all-round anti-virus product that combines solid detection with regular updates and straightforward management – all without imposing on the user. Our only gripe is that the auto-update can stumble at start-up when faced with a wireless connection, but soon recovers.



It would be fair to say that some of previous efforts from Sophos to deal with the smaller end of the security market haven't always worked as planned. Sophos and its products are well-suited to the larger enterprise, and many IT managers will know that enterprise products seldom scale down as well as they do up.

The company has clearly learned from previous mistakes and has performed major redevelopment of its smaller business offering, rather than just taking a big enterprise app and putting it in a small business box.

Sophos Anti-Virus SBE (Small Business Edition) 2.0, is a real step forward, still delivering solid anti virus performance, but at the same time being simple to deploy and manage - a bonus for the small business without a dedicated IT resource - but still with the central management functions if you want them.

Installation was very quick, though a reboot was required. Initial system scan was also very fast, and didn't get in the way of doing basic work while it scanned in the background.

Configuration is the one area that Sophos has always done well in - all of their products seem to manage to deliver a great deal of functionality and customisation, but retain a management interface that is very minimalist on buttons and boxes. SBE is no different. All the core features can be accessed from just three tabs within one main window. Advance drilldown is there, but whereas products such as F-Secure need such detailed configuration, the Sophos product needed little more than point it at a source of updates and set your reporting preferences.

When it comes to client management, Sophos has gone for a light-touch approach, further minimising the amount of work required. Remote clients are not managed directly, but you can push out a standard configuration and a preset update schedule, force manual updates and stop local changes being made.

We particularly liked the option to specify a secondary or backup source for downloading updates. This means you could opt for a centralised office service for the primary, and go straight to the source at Sophos for the backup - essential if you are travelling.

We did have one problem with the Sophos product, something that was mirrored by the F-Secure offering - when we tried it on a laptop that used a wireless LAN connection to get to the net, the initial check for updates would often fail. This is because on most occasions following a reboot or cold start, the anti virus application engages and tries to get online long before the Wi-Fi connection gets up and running. It soon corrects when the next periodic check takes place, but it is unfortunate nonetheless.

Despite the wireless issue, the Sophos product a solid all-round anti virus product that was exceptionally easy to install and deploy.

ON TEST

- McAfee Active VirusScan SMB Edition
- Symantec AntiVirus 10.2
- F-Secure Anti-Virus Small Business Suite
- Sophos Anti-Virus SBE 2.0

ANTI VIRUS ROUNDUP

Choosing the right anti virus product for your business means more than finding the best virus stopper, it's about finding the right product that can be managed and deployed without causing chaos during working hours.

The immediate thing we must recognise is that all four products tested were outstanding in terms of actual virus detection. We used a mixture of classic viruses and recent examples and all were trapped and dealt with as per our preference settings (we set up each app to quarantine, then again to disinfect). To be frank, this was no great surprise as the products tested are all based on proven anti virus technology from established vendors with a background in doing exactly this kind of work. It is rare to find an anti virus product today which fails in the basic art of actually identifying and isolating a virus.

For the business user and IT manager, the differentiation lies in how well you can manage the anti virus application and how much or how little disruption it causes the user. Here there is significant variation, as we discovered looking at only four products.

Both the F-Secure and the Symantec products offered a variety of centralised management options, many features also used in the larger enterprise products both companies offer. However, Symantec's product disappointed us with its updating, which impacted on the performance of the client computer, while the application itself was sluggish at everything it did. F-Secure was good at doing background updates, but was very awkward to configure and often struggled to perform an initial update on startup.

However, for us the outright winner was Anti-Virus SBE 2.0 from Sophos. As well as doing the job of an anti virus product well, it was easy to install, configure and offered the option to auto update directly from Sophos or from a local server. In either case, auto updates did not disrupt the user from their daily tasks. In fact you would have been hard pressed to know it was even there until it was actually needed to intercept a virus.