

Six safety tips for using gadgets with Windows Vista

Gadgets are easy-to-use mini programs that provide information at a glance and offer simple desktop access to tools you use most often.

For example, you can use gadgets to display business data, weather information, news updates, traffic maps, Internet radio streams, and even slide shows of online photo albums on your desktop.

A malicious gadget, like any malicious software, can be programmed to access your computer's files, collect your personal information, or show you unwanted content. To download and use gadgets safely, take the same safety precautions that you take with any other program or file you download from the Web:

- Know and trust the source of the gadget.
- Don't download or run gadgets from an Administrator-level user account.
- Use parental controls to keep children from downloading unsafe gadgets.
- Install up-to-date antispyware and anti-virus software.
- Keep Windows Vista up-to-date.
- Turn off Windows Sidebar if you don't want to use it.

Know and trust the source of the gadget

You can download gadgets for Windows Vista from a variety of Web sites, such as [Windows Live Gallery](#). You install gadgets on Windows Sidebar, which helps you organize your gadgets and move them around the desktop.

Remember that many Web sites, including Windows Live Gallery, host community-generated content, which is content that anyone can make available to others.

To check the publisher of a gadget

1. Click the **Download** button for the gadget.
2. Click **Open** in the dialog box that opens, and then click **Allow** in the next dialog box.

A dialog box like the following opens and displays the publisher of the gadget. If you are unsure about the source or publisher, click **Don't Run**. Do not download or run the program or gadget.



For information about sites you can download from with confidence, see [When to trust a website](#).

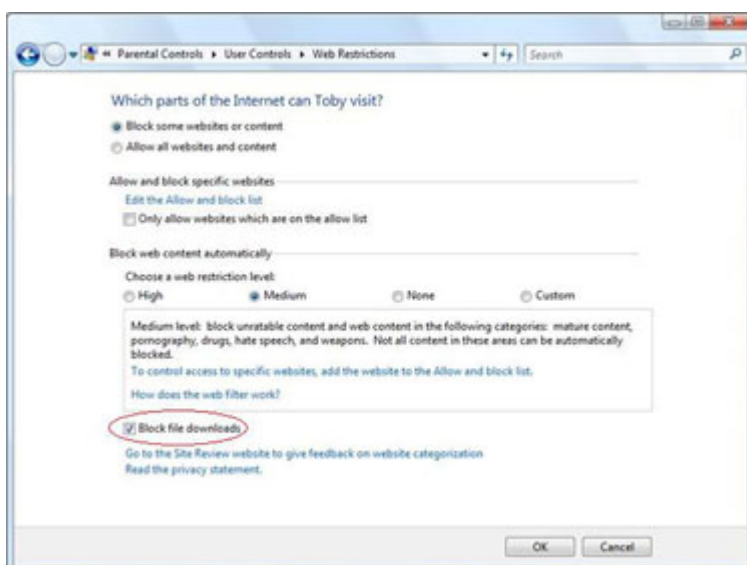
Do not download or run gadgets from an Administrator-level user account

Whenever you surf the Web, it's a good idea to use a limited user account, which is the default standard user configuration in [Windows Vista](#). When most programs attempt to perform a potentially dangerous operation that requires administrator privileges, Windows Vista asks you for your consent before allowing that program to run. For more information, see [Windows Vista User Account Control](#).

Use parental controls to keep children from downloading and installing gadgets

Windows Vista includes a powerful [set of parental control features](#) to help you monitor, manage, and administer your children's computer use.

You can use parental controls to block your children from downloading all files, such as gadgets and other programs, as follows:




Install up-to-date antivirus and antispyware software

Gadgets can contain malicious or unwanted software that tracks your activities or simply slows your computer. Try new antivirus and comprehensive computer health services like [Windows Live OneCare](#). To help prevent spyware or other potentially unwanted software, use Windows Defender, which comes with [Windows Vista](#).

Keep Windows Vista up-to-date

The easiest way to do this is to [turn on automatic updating](#) and use the recommended setting, which downloads recommended updates and installs them on a schedule you set. This is the best way to ensure you have the latest version of gadgets that ship with Windows Vista, and that potentially vulnerable gadgets are disabled.

Turn off Windows Sidebar if you don't want to use it

You can also choose to discontinue the use of gadgets and turn off the Windows Sidebar entirely. To turn Windows Sidebar off immediately, right-click the Sidebar icon on the Windows Vista task bar , and click **Exit**. To keep Windows Sidebar from automatically starting when Windows Vista starts, right-click the sidebar and then click **Properties**. Clear the **Start Sidebar when Windows starts** checkbox as shown and then click **OK**.

