## **The Different Types of Antivirus Scans**

Most antivirus programs have two or three different scanning options. In general, these options are usually a "Full" system scan, a "Custom" system scan, and a "Rapid/Hyper/Quick" scan option. The Quick option is sometimes referred to as a "Smart" scan.

## Full Scan

A full scan performs a thorough check of your entire system. Depending on the antivirus program, the antivirus will scan the following objects:

- 1. All hard drives, removable storage, and network drives
- 2. System memory (RAM)
- 3. System backups
- 4. Startup folders
- 5. Registry items

A full system scan takes several hours, depending on how much data you have stored. In that, a full system scan is a thorough, in-depth analysis of everything on your system.

When to use? Use a full scan when you need to check your entire system. Some security experts advise completing a full scan every two weeks. But for most people, <u>a single full scan per month is usually enough.</u>

## **Custom Scan**

The custom scan allows you the same in-depth scanning functionality as a full scan, but you choose the locations to scan.

However, if you switch to a custom scan, you can tell the antivirus to avoid specific drives. If your system uses C: for your operating system and download folders, focus the scan there. At other times, if you encounter suspicious behavior, set your antivirus to scan the specific folder.

## Hyper/Smart/Quick Scan

Finally, some antivirus tools have the option for a quick scan. This type of rapid system scan comes under different names, depending on the antivirus suite. So, how does a quick scan vary from a full scan?

- 1. Commonly infected files and folders
- 2. Running processes and threads
- 3. System memory (RAM)
- 4. Startup folders
- 5. Registry items

The quick scan item list looks very similar to the full scan list. However, it has two major differences (again, these differences do vary slightly by antivirus suite).

First, a quick scan only analyzes locations where malware is likely to lurk, rather than every single file on your system. This alone drastically reduces the scan time. Second, some antivirus programs only scan for files that have been modified since the last scan. In this, the antivirus is skimming through data until it finds something worth notification.

In most cases, a quick scan should at least discover a virus, even if it doesn't directly identify the variant or even the root directory of the infection. If your quick scan detects something serious, you can always switch to a full scan to try and uncover more infected files and information about what you're dealing with.