

The Freeware Download Sites That No Longer Force Crapware On You

In the past, we have discussed the fact that “crapware” is regularly foisted upon unsuspecting users by pretty much every big freeware site, including the venerable SourceForge, Tucows, and CNet (aka Download.com.) Since then, a few sites—including SourceForge, Tucows, and CNet—have started cleaning up their acts.

Most freeware download sites still use shady tactics, unfortunately, cramming their own installers full of unwanted software and misleading advertisements down your throat in order to make a buck. But now that a few are getting better, it is best that credit be given to where credit is due—so consider this an ongoing list of sites that have made things right.

At the end of January 2016, **SourceForge** was sold to a company named BIZX, LLC. The new owners immediately began cleaning up SourceForge, terminating the controversial “DevShare” program that wrapped open-source installers in junkware, sometimes against the wishes of their developers. “We want to restore our reputation as a trusted home for open source software, and this was a clear first step towards that. We’re more interested in doing the right thing than making extra short-term profit,” they wrote in their announcement.

SourceForge appears to be a trustworthy place to download open-source software once again.

The second most important problem—misleading “Download” buttons that push you to third-party websites offering open-source project installers wrapped in junkware—also appears to have improved. Those ads on the new SourceForge have disappeared.

Tucows is another old freeware download site that succumbed to the temptation of packing its installers with junkware. On May 3, 2016, Tucows announced that it, too, was done with that practice. Tucows isn’t just a software download site—the company also makes money from selling domain names, cell phone service, and fiber Internet.

Download.com finally ended its “CNET Installer” program sometime in early 2016, although it did this without any public announcement. You can now visit

Download.com and you'll get direct links to download programs without any additional junkware.

This website still has a ways to go, however. They need to clean up their advertising and get rid of ads with misleading green "Download" buttons that encourage visitors to click the wrong thing. But Download.com deserves credit for abandoning its much-hated installer.

FossHub and Ninite Remain Excellent

Here's a list of a few high-quality freeware download sites that *never* sold out their users.

[FossHub](#) is an excellent download site that many projects switched to when they were abandoning SourceForge. It's a download hosting site for free and open-source software (or "FOSS"). FossHub has never bundled any junkware with its downloads. Download pages just have a single unobtrusive advertisement to help pay the bills—that's it. FossHub remains trustworthy site.

[Ninite](#) is also great. For awhile, it was the best centralized place to get Windows freeware safely, and nothing has changed there. Among the big general freeware download sites, Ninite was the only one that won't try to force junk onto your computer—after all, FossHub is just for open-source software.

Ninite offers an especially useful tool to quickly download and install software on a new PC, and it has never bundled junkware. Ninite even lets you install software that normally includes its own, developer-added junkware and skips it for you. For example, you can use Ninite to install Java without it offering Java's usual installer junkware.