

# Willow Valley Computer Club

November 2024 | Newsletter | Volume 25, Issue 5

Programs are at 2:00 pm the first Thursday of the month (except July-August) in the Cultural Center unless otherwise noted.

## Inside this issue:

- [Volunteers Needed](#)
- [What is a Firewall?](#)

## Computer Club Leadership

- President: Al Williams
- Vice President: Dick Beidleman
- Secretary: Paula Sandridge
- Treasurer: Lee Wermuth
- Previous President: Sid Paskowitz

## Committee Chairpersons

- Club Website: Paula Sandridge
- Computer Room: Lee Wermuth
- Information Central: Sid Paskowitz
- Newsletter: Mike Pancione
- Programs: Dick Beidleman & Bob Schaffer
- Publicity: Bill Adams
- SmartLife: Al Fulvio
- Training: Bill Skelly

## Director

- CCTC: John Santora

## Advisors

- Bruce Mawson
- Tony Poulos
- Cathy Thorn

## President's Pen by Al Williams

Welcome to the Computer Club's November Newsletter!

Happy November from the Computer Club! We're excited to welcome John Santora as a new contributor this month. His firewall article is a great way to learn about this vital security tool. We hope you enjoy it!

Cybersecurity Awareness Month is winding down, but the threat of cyberattacks remains. One simple additional step to bolster your security is to *remove any software you no longer use*. Unused software can harbor vulnerabilities that hackers may exploit.

Al

## Contact Information

For more information about the Computer Club, please contact Al Williams via email at [wvcomputerclub@gmail.com](mailto:wvcomputerclub@gmail.com).

Please keep your email address on Club records current so we can send you important emails. Send email corrections or updates to Lee Wermuth at [lweremuth582@gmail.com](mailto:lweremuth582@gmail.com).

Bill Skelly is the Willow Valley Computer Club Training Coordinator. We are always looking for residents qualified to teach computer-related topics. We want our classes to support your needs. Contact Bill ([whskelly@aol.com](mailto:whskelly@aol.com)) to volunteer or to offer ideas on topics needed.

## Computer Club Technology Center

**NOTE:** The Computer Club Technology Center (CCTC) is open on Mondays only, from 10 am to 4 pm. The CCTC is located on the 5th floor of Manor North 'J' building. The door may be closed, but with a sign indicating *Please Knock*.

Apple Items Available: See Bruce Thompson in the CCTC.



## What is a Firewall – and Do I Need It?

By John Santora – Director, Computer Club Technology Center

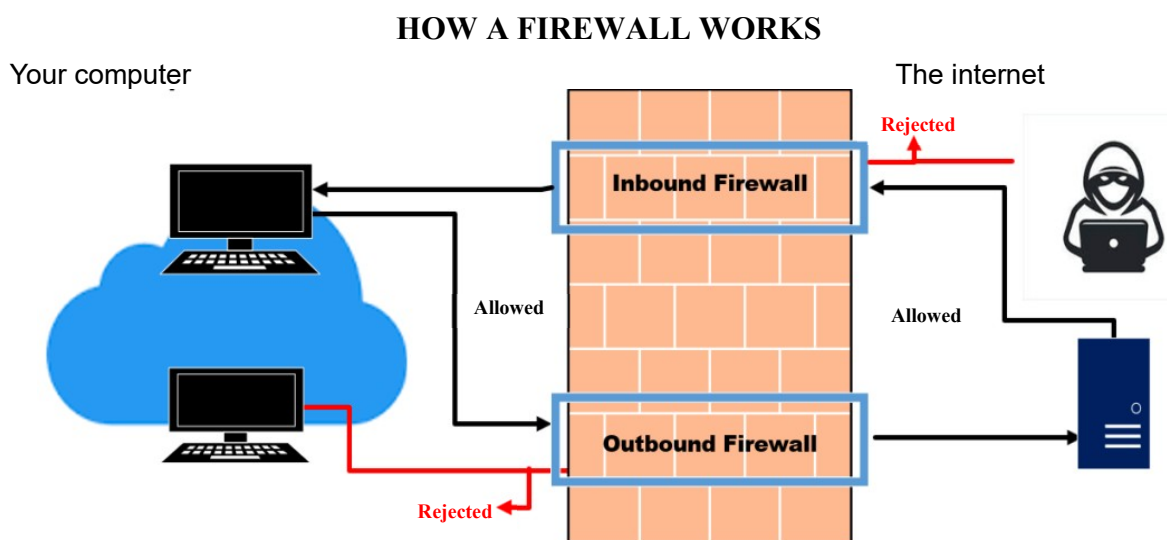
Hackers are becoming more sophisticated, and brazen, with each passing day. This article won't cover all the various methods that hackers can, and do, try to exploit our devices. We will focus on a “first line of defense” that we all can implement as part of a chain of protection from unwanted intrusions.

Like many technology terms, “firewall” is a term appropriated from a different era. Prior to the internet (before 1985), a firewall meant “a partition made of fireproof material to prevent the spread of a fire from one part of a building or ship to another or to isolate an engine compartment, such as on a plane or automobile.”

[*Dictionary.com*]

Since the dawn of the internet, and especially in the era of malicious hacking, there is a technology definition for a firewall: “an integrated collection of security measures designed to prevent unauthorized electronic access to a networked computer system.” [*Dictionary.com*] Think of a computer firewall as a door with a series of locks, for which you (or your computer) control the keys.

At its most basic, a firewall either permits or blocks a requested network connection—such as a website, an e-mail, or a file transfer.



*Image courtesy of Microsoft*

As you can see, a firewall works in two directions. It prevents unwanted, and sometimes unknown, intrusions from the internet, and it also prevents access to potentially malicious data that you might unintentionally request.

In business environments, firewalls can be separate pieces of hardware. For most residential users, the software firewalls that come with Microsoft Windows and the Apple Mac operating system are sufficient.

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The Windows firewall is “on” by default, while the MacOS firewall is not. Some anti-virus or anti-malware programs may turn it off. Checking to see that your computer’s firewall is working is a simple process that can help and instructions are given at the end of this article.

Firewalls do not guarantee that your computer will not be attacked. A firewall primarily helps to protect against malicious *traffic*, not necessarily against malicious *programs* (i.e., viruses or malware). Warning: Firewalls will not protect you if you click on an email attachment that was forwarded to you from a known contact, which might then install or run malware on your computer. For that, you also need anti-virus or anti-malware protection and, of course, constant vigilance to protect your computers, property, financial assets and even your reputation.

While **Windows 11** and **MacOS Sequoia** have additional anti-malware and anti-virus protections built into their operating systems, the Computer Club recommends that for additional peace of mind, residents install **Malwarebytes**, which is available for both operating systems. The built-in anti-malware tools and Malwarebytes use different approaches to find and quarantine malicious software. Using Malwarebytes in addition to the internal tools increases the likelihood of finding and isolating malware.

Geek alert: **Linux** is an operating system used by a handful of residents. It powers many web servers, cloud platforms and software development teams. Linux has an internal firewall and, typically, it is enabled at the time of installation of a desktop version. This article does not discuss Linux firewalls further.

### ***Do iPhones, iPads, Android phones and tablets need a firewall?***

iPhones and iPads do not have a firewall. However, they do have built-in security and privacy features that allow you to control what and how apps can access your data, location, camera and microphone. iPhones and iPads also have encryption features to protect user data, and the ability to remotely wipe a device if it is lost or stolen. Apple claims that iPhones and iPads do not need antivirus software. There are precautions you can take:

- Download apps only from the official app store
- Keep your iOS or iPadOS updated
- Be cautious of emails and messages from unknown sources
- Avoid clicking on suspicious links
- Restart your device if you see suspicious messages or if an app spontaneously quits
- Avoid “jailbreaking” your device, i.e.: allowing unfettered access to the operating system and your data.

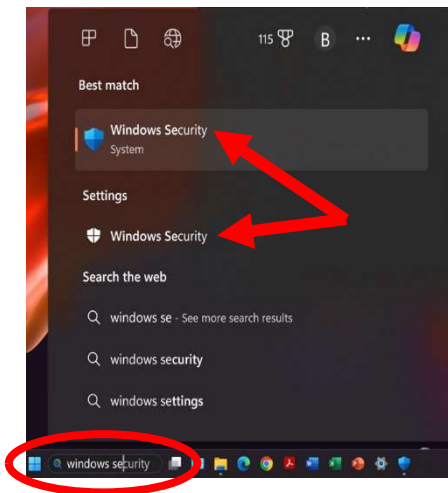
Android devices use a variation of the Linux operating system, and do not have firewalls by default. They have built-in security features to help protect against malware, phishing and spam. While that may be sufficient for many users, Android devices can be susceptible to malicious exploits. The Computer Club recommends that residents install **Malwarebytes**, available from the Google Play store.

Here is how to check if your laptop or desktop computer – whether it’s a Windows PC or an Apple Mac – has its firewall turned on.

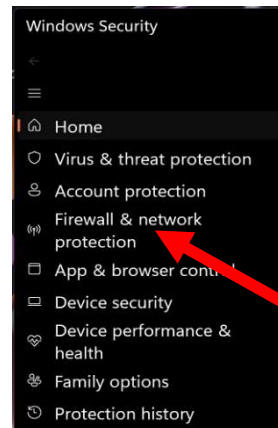
### **Windows 11** (*similar for Windows10*)

As mentioned, the Windows firewall is on by default, but you should check to make sure. Type “windows security” into the Search bar.

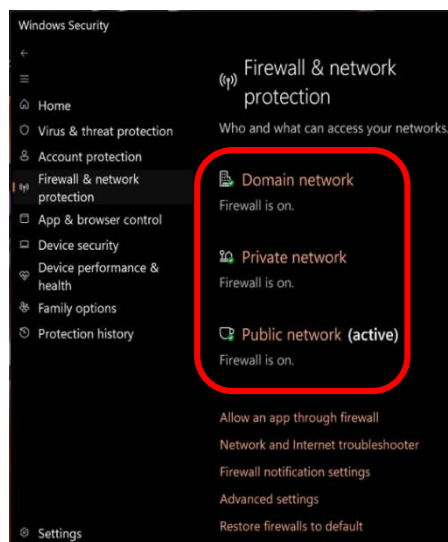
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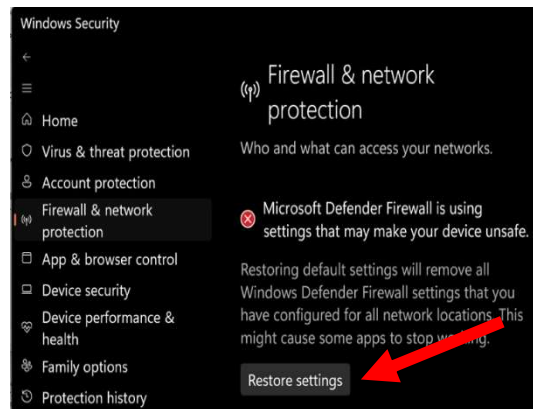
(1) Click on Firewall & network protection



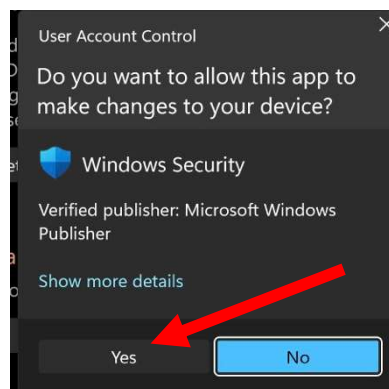
(2) Then click on "Windows Security"



(3) Ensure that these three items say: "Firewall is on." (The Windows 11 firewall is "on" by default.) If so, you're done, and you've confirmed that your computer is protected.




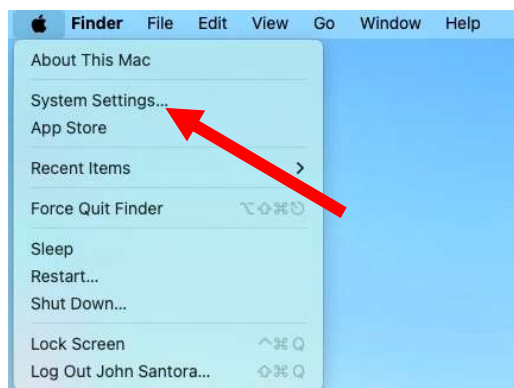
(4) If it says: "Microsoft Defender is using settings that may make your device unsafe," click on "Restore settings" to turn on firewall protection.



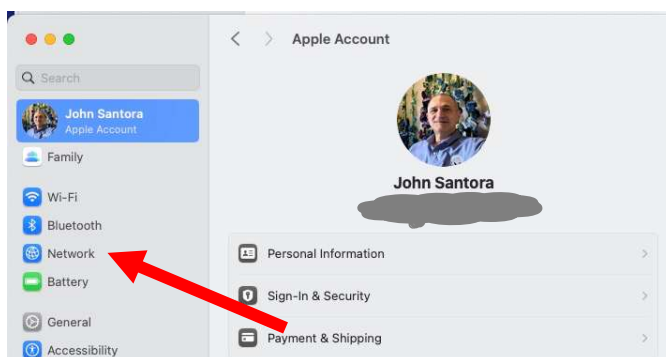
(5) Answer "Yes" to the prompt. After a few seconds, you'll see that all three now say "Firewall is on."

## MacOS Sequoia (similar in previous versions)

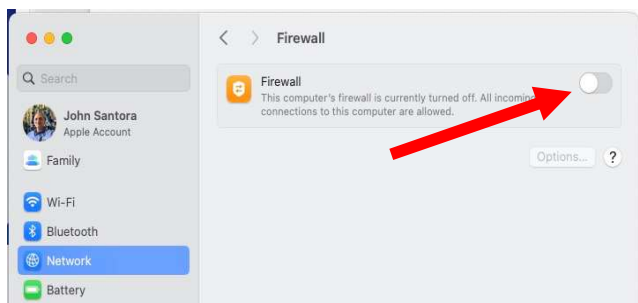
The MacOS built-in firewall is *not* on by default. Click on the Apple menu  at the upper left of your screen.



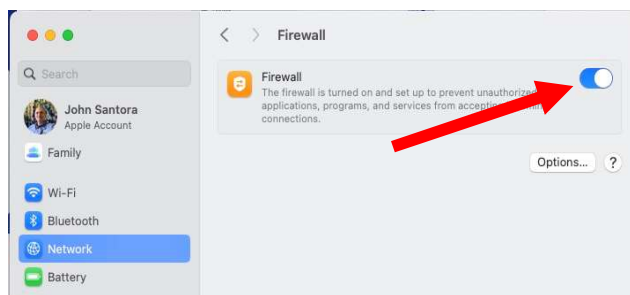
(1) Then, click on System Settings.



(2) Click on Network.



(3) Click on Firewall, and then move the slider to the right to enable the MacOS firewall. (It is **not** turned on by default.)



(4) That's it! Close the window, and your Mac is now better prepared to fend off unwanted intrusions.

At the time this article is written (October 2024), there are some known issues with Firefox and the internal MacOS Sequoia firewall. If you see that Firefox won't start, or can't access certain websites, try using another browser, such as Safari or Chrome, both of which compare favorably with Firefox. This should be fixed in a MacOS update in the near future.

## The Final Word

A firewall is only *part* of a method of computing security that includes hardware, software and *human behavior*. It's important that you always remain vigilant to potential scams and other internet risks.

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**Willow Valley Computer Club  
Volunteer Opportunity**

**Volunteer Position Title:** Deputy CCTC Director

**Description of Role:** The Deputy CCTC Director assists the CCTC Director as needed to accomplish the objectives set forth by the Willow Valley Computer Club's Executive Committee.

**Training:** The CCTC Director will provide training as needed for the Deputy CCTC Director to successfully accomplish their assignments.

**Reporting:** The Deputy CCTC Director will report to the CCTC Director.

**Time Commitment:** A minimum of four hours per week is needed. The candidate must be able to work during hours acceptable to the CCTC Director

**Qualifications:** Prior operations experience is desirable. A willingness to learn is imperative.

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**WVCC mission:**  
"to provide the means to educate beginners or interested non-users on how to use a computer"

**WVCC mission:**  
"to provide a forum for interchange of computer information among members"

**WVCC mission:** "to arrange for speakers to talk about subjects of interest to those with some background and experience in computer use"

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